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# CAUTIONS

FOR

# THE TIMES.

ADDRESSED TO

THE PARISHIONERS OF A PARISH IN ENGLAND, BY THEIR  
FORMER RECTOR,

RICHARD WHATELY, D.D.

ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

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IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.—ON ROMANISM.

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# PREFACE

TO

## THE AMERICAN EDITION.

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ARCHBISHOP WHATELY having publicly acknowledged the chief authorship of this work, his name is, without impropriety, affixed to the American edition. It was commenced in London in 1851. It is composed of twenty-nine tracts, and the work is now complete. The first eight numbers, extending through 140 pages, 8vo., of the English edition, are upon *Romanism*; the succeeding ten, making 160 pages, are upon *Tractarianism*; and the remaining eleven, making 174 pages, are upon *reactions* from Romish and Tractarian tendencies toward latitudinarianism, rationalism, antinomianism, and infidelity. The first division of the work is republished in this form; the second and third will immediately follow, if there should be a sufficient demand for them. It is, of course, superfluous to speak of the distinguished author. He acts with no party in the Church of England; nor would any party, either there or here, be responsible for all that he says in the present work. Hence it is not conceived necessary for those at whose instance this republication is made to append notes, or express their dissent from some views occurring in a few of the numbers. The distinguished author has kindly given his consent to the omission of any numbers, the subject upon which they treat being stated to preserve the connection. But no desire is felt to judge for the reader, and therefore the whole is given. It will be found inferior to nothing heretofore published by the archbishop. No one of his works, it is believed, has had so extensive a sale. It is full of instruction and interest to the general reader, abounding in rich and glowing common sense. Romanism and its numerous related errors of



the Tractarian school are discussed and refuted in a course of reasoning marked

I. By entire fairness and candour. Not only are the strongest arguments of Roman Catholics and their abettors brought forward, but care is taken to put them in what the authors of them consider their most convincing form, while errors on the part of Protestants are freely admitted and considered.

II. By respectful language, as also by a most refined and agreeable wit. The reader is often reminded of *The Provincial Letters* and the classic followers of Jansenius. It is most grateful to the feelings of those who value charity, as well as truth, to find controversies [which cannot be avoided without faithlessness to the cause of Christ] conducted without any thing of bitterness or discourtesy. The true principles of religious toleration are not only clearly laid down in these tracts, but fully exhibited in their spirit. These tracts are also marked

III. By consummate ability. While unsurpassed in logical power, they are at the same time easy to read. A child can understand them. No wonder that they have contributed, among other causes, to produce such extraordinary effects in Ireland, and that the demand for them still increases. A stupid unreasoning submission to mere authority, or a mind perverted upon the whole subject of religion, is, of course, proof against any thing; but the number is comparatively small who, upon reading these tracts, will fail to perceive not only that Romanism and Tractarianism rest upon the same base, but that they are alike incapable of any scriptural or rational defence.

Many have waited with impatience for their republication, which, it is believed, cannot but be both acceptable and useful to the American public.



# CAUTIONS FOR THE TIMES.

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## No. 1.

'Tis the Thunder that frights,  
But the Lightning that smites.

MY DEAR FRIENDS :—

Though we have long been separated, I have never ceased, as you know, to take a lively interest in your welfare, and have addressed you accordingly before now, since I ceased to be your pastor, when I saw special occasion for doing so.

And such an occasion I think there is now, on account of the great and general excitement that has arisen throughout England. The steps lately taken by the rulers of the Romish Church, have caused great alarm, or resentment, or both, in the minds of many persons. And I think it not unlikely that some may be perplexed and confused by not clearly understanding the questions which are now being debated, and that they may consequently feel alarm in the wrong quarter, and may take wrong measures for guarding against supposed danger.

I have resolved, therefore, to lay before you some of my thoughts on these points, and, with the assistance of some friends who think with me, to address to you some **TIMELY CAUTIONS** respecting them.

And these I propose to print and publish, from time to time, in the hope that they may prove useful to others as well as to you.

The resentment and apprehension that are now prevailing have been occasioned, as you are aware, by the Pope's having thought fit to appoint bishops to preside over the several districts into which he has divided England. In doing this, he has spoken in a style which is very offensive to the greater part of the English nation, from its being so arrogant and assuming. He speaks of us all as being spiritually his subjects, whether we choose to submit to him or not; and he speaks of himself as Christ's vicegerent on earth, the supreme Head of the Catholic (*i. e.* Universal) Church, and as entitled to the obedience of all professing Christians throughout the world.

Now, these claims are nothing new. They have been for many centuries essential parts of the Roman Catholic faith. Long before the Reformation which took place in our country above three hun-

dred years ago, and ever since, the Romish Church has pretended to be "*the Universal or Catholic Church*," of which all Christians are in reality members, and to which they are all bound to submit. And, accordingly, those who are really members of that Church always prefer to call themselves Catholics.

But these pretensions have lately been put forward in this country in a more ostentatious manner than we have been accustomed to; and this has given great offence to some, and absolutely terrified others, as if they thought that our Protestant religion was just about to be overthrown.

Hence, some persons, in their loyal anxiety about the royal prerogative, are desirous of having laws passed to prevent these Romish bishops from assuming their new titles. And several have gone much further, and have proposed, in speeches at some of the public meetings that have been held, that our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects should be deprived of the civil rights which were conceded to them twenty years ago, and should even be subjected to penal laws.

And many persons again—indeed the greater part of those who have attended those meetings—have come forward merely to protest against the Pope's claims, to censure, in violent language, the doctrines and practices of his church, but without proposing any definite measures to be adopted, or suggesting any course to be pursued. They merely lament and declaim.

Now, these last ought to remember that their opponents will be not unlikely to compare them to the mob at Ephesus, who bawled out, "for the space of two hours, Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" without having, as the town-clerk reminded them, any definite cause to be tried, or measure to be proposed; the majority "not knowing for what cause they were come together."

Now this would have been an error, even supposing Diana had been a true Deity.

Widely different, indeed, I am fully convinced, is our religion from that of the idolatrous Ephesians. But this is only an additional reason why we should use widely different means for supporting it. We justly despise the folly of their worship; and we should be the more careful not to imitate their folly in making "that day's uproar."

I do not say that a wise and good and courageous man will never feel indignation and apprehension. But when he does feel them, he will not give vent to them in *words*, but in action; and not in violent and ill-considered action, but in deliberate and prudent conduct, directed to some practical end.

When the commander of a fortress thinks it likely to be attacked by an enemy, he does not show his apprehensions by crying out with terror, or *lamenting*, and wringing his hands; but he



strengthens its defences if there seems need, and keeps his garrison more vigilantly on the watch. And if an enemy actually does approach the fortress, he does not occupy himself in *scolding* and reviling them, but, if they are not in formidable force, lets them alone—if they are, cannonades them.

When, therefore, any orator addresses you in eloquent harangues against Romanism and against “papal aggressions,” merely for the sake of what is called “*expressing his sentiments*,” you will do well to cut him short by asking, “Well, what do you wish us to *do*? What *steps* do you advise to be taken? If you have nothing definite to propose, and merely want to tell us that you disapprove of the Church of Rome, and are very angry and very much frightened, we are ready to take all that for granted. We do not wish to listen to a long speech, merely to say that ‘England expects every man to do his duty!’”

Remember, also, that these addresses to your feelings are not only profitless, and tend to no good result, but, if you give way to their influence, may have a very mischievous effect. When our passions are worked up to a high pitch, we naturally catch eagerly at any proposal which promises to afford an opportunity of gratifying them, without thinking about its justice or expediency. Nay, the *more* scope such a proposal gives for indulging our angry passions (*i. e.* the *less* likely it is to be just or fit,) the more eagerly do we catch at it when we are so disposed. Hence, the orators of whom I have been speaking not only waste time by their harangues, nor do they merely bring discredit on your proceedings as “a great hubbub about nothing,” but they *prepare the way* for other and more practical persons, who would take advantage of the present panic to persuade you to re-enact the old penal laws against Roman Catholics, or some new ones of the same description. Now, as a man in a passion is apt to strike a heavier blow than is right, or is at all necessary to his own defence, so, if we suffer our minds to be overheated by these indignant and alarming appeals, we may be led to take measures against the Roman Catholics which would be unjust in themselves, and injurious to our own cause.

I am fully persuaded that those, for instance, who advocate any sort of penal law for the purpose of stopping the progress of Roman Catholic opinions, bring discredit and damage to the Christian religion in general, and to our own church in particular.

I. *They know not what spirit they are of.* So our Lord told those zealous disciples who, after the example of an Old Testament prophet, would have called down fire upon the Samaritans. Now, such miraculous penalties as this would certainly (as being inflicted by God himself) have been much fitter means of repressing error than penalties inflicted by a human magistrate. Yet our



Saviour blames the very *desire* of even those miraculously inflicted penalties, as foreign to the spirit of *his* religion. Those who seek to repress and discourage erroneous doctrines by civil penalties of any kind, seem to me to run counter to the plainest precepts and constant practice of Christ and his apostles; neglecting the means of conviction and persuasion which *they* deliberately chose, and employing those worldly motives which *they* deliberately rejected. Our Lord, you know, when questioned by the Roman governor, (who wanted to discover whether the new religion was a fit matter for his jurisdiction,) declared expressly that "his kingdom was *not* of this world;" and when pressed to explain in what sense he was a *king*, added, "For this end was I born, and for this I came into the world, *that I should bear witness to the truth.*" These declarations, taken together, amount to saying that his kingdom was *not* to be advanced by outward force, and that it *was* to be advanced by rational argument. Indeed, it is most manifest, that the only *faith* which God can value is a sincere conviction grounded upon diligent and impartial examination of evidence; and that the only *obedience* which can find favour in his sight is a cordial obedience of the heart. And if so, is it not equally manifest that rewards and punishments, distributed by a human magistrate, to encourage one religion and discourage another, must, so far as they have any direct influence at all, have a mischievous influence? They must tend to produce assent without rational examination, or practice without sincere conviction. If they have any good effects at all, it can be only indirectly and by accident.

"The highest truth, if professed by one who believes it not in his heart, is to him a lie, and he sins greatly by professing it. Let us try as much as we will to convince our neighbours; but let us beware of influencing their conduct when we fail in influencing their convictions. He who bribes or frightens his neighbour into doing an act which no good man would do for reward, or from fear, is tempting his neighbour to sin; he is assisting to lower and to harden his conscience; to make him act for the favour or from the fear of man, instead of for the favour and from the fear of God: and, if this be a sin in him, it is a double sin in us to tempt him to it."\*

As a general rule, a resort to restrictions, and to force of every kind, must be, on the whole, more favourable to error than to truth in all subjects; because it tends to take away the great *advantage* which truth has over error. Truth being in itself stronger than falsehood, may be expected to gain a superiority where there is free discussion. But laws and penalties may be on the wrong side as well as on the right. Those, therefore, who resort to these may,

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\* Arnold's *Christian Life*, p. 435.



not unfairly, be presumed to have, themselves, some distrust of the goodness of their cause ; since they remove the trial from a court (that of reason) in which truth has an advantage over falsehood, and appeal to brute-force, in which truth has no such advantage. A fair and *free trial* is what, generally speaking, the intelligent advocates of truth, in all subjects, will be likely to call for, and the advocates of error to deprecate.

Thus, by calling in civil penalties to the *aid* of truth, you create additional (and often angry) prejudices against it in minds which you cannot bribe or frighten over to your side of the question.

The employment of such means, therefore, cannot fail of bringing damage and detriment to the cause of the gospel. But it would also be, for special reasons, highly injurious to our own church in particular.

II. Having recourse to legislative assistance would, it is obvious, tend to confirm what the Romanists are always saying,—that ours is a *parliamentary religion*. For, if it is to be kept up by legal enactments, and *only* so, it cannot be based on truth.

Now, it is, indeed, quite true that ours is a *parliamentary ecclesiastical establishment*. For, when we speak of an establishment, we have reference to certain civil privileges and endowments. These no one could possess but by law ; and it is, therefore, by law alone that the Roman Catholic religion itself possesses in various countries privileges and endowments. You will remember, in the English history, that, when Queen Mary wished to *re-establish* the Roman Catholic religion in England, she took just the same measures for that purpose as King Edward had taken to establish Protestantism ;—she got parliament to repeal his acts, and pass others, giving various privileges and endowments to the clergy in communion with the Pope. The Roman Catholic establishment was then quite as much *parliamentary* as the Protestant establishment is now.

But though we have undeniably a *parliamentary establishment*, we have *not*, I trust, a *parliamentary religion* ; *i. e.* one which all would cease to believe and profess if *legal* support was withdrawn from it. We do not concede to our prince and parliament (what the Roman Catholics do concede to their popes and councils) the right of determining for us what we ought to believe ; though it is not unlikely that many of our princes and parliaments were not more unfit to determine such matters than many popes and councils have been. We do not think that human laws can possibly *oblige* any man to religious faith or practice ; and therefore we reject with scorn the imputation of having a *parliamentary religion*. But those who seem to apprehend danger to the Protestant *faith*, unless laws are passed to check Roman Catholics, appear, by their conduct, to *concede* that point, and justify that scandalous imputation.



Let it be remembered also that, among those of our own communion who have already some tendency toward Rome, the impression generally prevails that our church is already too closely connected with, and too much controlled by the state. Nor is that impression confined to them—being shared in also by most of our Protestant dissenting brethren. To place the Roman Catholic Church, therefore, in the position of being a sort of champion of ecclesiastical independence, would be to increase its attractions for weak persons among ourselves, and even gain for it some chance of sympathy from the dissenters also. Then, too, to appear before the world as persecuted people, (especially when the suffering is more showy than severe,) has wonderful charms for fanatical dispositions; while the generous spirit is apt to go rather too far in excusing and helping the persecuted party.

III. I do not, however, deny that there are *other* objects, besides the support of the Protestant religion, and the repressing of Romish errors, which may require legislative interference in the present case. Though the *clergy* ought to feel that their civil rank and dignities are the meanest accident of their office, and therefore should not make them the principal topic of complaint against papal aggressions, or exhibit any peculiar nervousness about them; yet the maintenance of the queen's just prerogatives and dignity against any attempt to infringe them, and security against foreign influence in temporal matters, are, doubtless, fit grounds for the interference of *statesmen*. But those who are for enacting or enforcing just and moderate laws for the due support of the regal dignity, are sadly *crippled* by the other and violent advisers. For any thing, however moderate, will excite suspicion, and dread, and animosity, if believed to be only a *first-step*,—an *instalment* of the persecuting system which those others advocate. Suppose, for instance, that certain depredations or outrages prevail extensively in the country—something like the *Swing-system* among yourselves, or *Rebecca and her daughters* in Wales, or the *Luddite* riots that some of you may remember,—and that laws are proposed for checking those disturbances. If there be a number of men who, in declaring against such outrages, cry out for *suspending the Habeas Corpus*, and putting the country under *military government*, &c., there will be a dread excited that the moderate and needful laws are only the *beginning* of a sacrifice of all our liberties; and hence the idea will become so unpopular that it will hardly be possible to pass *any*. Moderate men will be apt to draw back from co-operating at all with the violent, lest the movement should end in throwing power into the hands of persecutors. It was for this reason that the constitutional party, in the times of Charles I. in England, and Louis XVI. in France, were unable to save the monarchy, because they dared not act with sufficient



vigour to crush the seditious, lest, in doing so, they should re-establish the old tyranny.

IV. But the thing to be most firmly settled in your minds is, that the *great* danger is one which you *can* guard against, and guard against sufficiently without any new legal enactments—that of having your own belief perverted. The Pope cannot *make* you Roman Catholics. No one would be alarmed at a fire-brand falling where there were no *combustibles*; though even a spark would be sufficient to blow up a magazine of gunpowder. Now, as for influence over men's minds, *that* not only *may* be gained without any infringement of the laws, or any such assumption of titles as offends men in the present case, but is, in some respects, *more likely* to be gained without them. In a well-governed community, a thief is more dangerous than a robber, and fraud more likely to succeed than force. It was, you know, without the aid of any such showy *apparatus* as has been now employed, that very considerable progress was made, through the past years, in gaining over Englishmen to the Roman Catholic religion; and, if all that showy apparatus were to disappear to-morrow, the Roman Catholics would still have all the arguments and inducements left them which have exercised so great an influence upon many members of our communion; and if, by the use of such means, they once gain over a large majority of the people of England to their side, it will be impossible to deny them all the titles and privileges they may choose to claim. If, on the contrary, the great mass of the English people remain steadfast Protestants, the retaining of such titles, and the putting forth of such claims, on the part of the Romish hierarchy, will soon appear simply ridiculous, and be discontinued for that reason. You may not be aware—but it is a fact—that there are at present in England a set of men who pretend to be the apostles of Jesus Christ,—the foundation on which his church is built,—and the lawful spiritual governors of all christendom. But, because their adherents form a very small body, few persons take any other notice of these pretensions than to pity the deluded men who put them forward. Equally pitiable would appear the claims of Cardinal Wiseman to govern “all Middlesex,” &c., if the people of Middlesex notoriously paid no attention to his commands.

Here I make an end for the present; but I hope to send you another “Caution” soon again, in which I will try to put you on your guard against some of the most plausible and popular arguments brought forward by Roman Catholics, who desire to make men converts to their system.



## No. 2.

Los amenazados comen pan.—SPAN. PROVERB.  
Threatened folks live long.

MY DEAR FRIENDS :—

Suppose all the principal undertakers in the world were to have a fancy to send down to your town a vast quantity of very handsomely-adorned coffins, and velvet palls, and plumed hearses, and parade them about your streets, offering them at moderate prices, and assuring you that you would very soon have need of them, perhaps some timorous and unthinking people would be frightened, because these things are connected with death. But the more considerate would reflect that these things are not the *cause*, but the *effect*, of mortality. A man does not die *because* his coffin is made; but a coffin is made or purchased for him because he is dead.

Such an apparatus as I have been supposing would, indeed, indicate a belief on the part of the undertakers that there was, or would soon be, a great mortality among you. But a sensible man would say to himself—Whether this be so or not, we shall not die the sooner for all this display of hearses and coffins, unless it be some silly people who may be frightened to death. I, for my part, will take all reasonable care of my own health; and I will inform these people that I am quite well at present, and should not be the less so though they were to send down all the feathers of all the ostriches in Arabia; and that I have no occasion for any of their wares; for that, when my time does come, I mean to be buried in a plain coffin, made by the carpenter of the parish, and to have a sober, quiet funeral, like my fathers before me.

Now, this is just what a sensible man thinks of the step lately taken by the rulers of the Church of Rome. It certainly does indicate a belief that there is a great and increasing number of Roman Catholics in England. But, if the people of England choose to keep to their own Bible and Prayer-book, and to study these with attention, all the Romish cardinals, and bishops, and priests in the world will have no more effect in bringing them under the dominion of Rome than hearses and coffins would in causing a man's death.

The Pope has, doubtless, been led to over-rate very much the conversions that have been made to his church; and still more, to form extravagant expectations for the future. But I am far from saying that there is no danger from that quarter. I only say it is a danger, not from cardinals and bishops in splendid dresses, but from the instilling of erroneous *principles* into men's minds. It



is a danger which you are to guard against, not by breaking the windows of Roman Catholic chapels, or assaulting priests, (as I am sorry to hear some riotous mob has done at Cheltenham,) but by labouring yourselves to *know* and to *practise* the true religion of the gospel.

Suppose the Christians of Ephesus and the other churches founded by the apostles, instead of studying to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ," and to reform their lives so as to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," "always ready to give a reason of the hope that was in them in meekness," and to be "gentle unto all men; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;" had assembled with tumult to pull down the Temple of Diana and the other heathen gods, and to pelt the priests with stones, the Christians would have been put down, *very justly*, by the civil authorities, with the aid of soldiers, as mischievous rioters. Such conduct, therefore, is just what an unscrupulous opponent would wish for.

It may seem to some strange, and even ludicrous, that the Pope, who would be hooted out of his own capital by his own people, if he had not six or seven thousand foreign bayonets to support him, should proceed to parcel out England, as if it were a conquered country, among officers of his own.

But neither in England nor anywhere else could the doctrines and claims of the Romish Church be admitted, if there were not something plausible and likely to deceive the unwary in what is urged in favour of them.

And in this, as well as in all other similar cases, it is much the wiser (as it is also the honest) course, to *examine* the things specially alleged in favour of the Roman Catholic system, than to close our ears to them at once, as what *must be* nothing but shuffling, sophistry, or inconsistent nonsense. People who set out with the assumption that Roman Catholics have nothing at all to say for themselves, are generally disconcerted, and sometimes have their Protestant faith shaken, when they are forced to perceive that the Roman Catholics have much more to say for themselves than they suspected. When it is almost certain that you will meet with objections to your religion sooner or later, it is better that you should hear of them first, as exposed and refuted sophisms, from your own teachers, than as new and startling arguments from persons of a different creed.

Let me, then, briefly notice some of the pleas which are most popularly urged in behalf of the Roman Catholic system.

1. The title "Catholic," which they give their church, and themselves as belonging to it, appears to have a great charm for their own minds, and to produce some effect upon weak people in other communions. That effect is the greater upon some of *us*, because



we retain in our belief (commonly called “the Apostles’ Creed”) the article—“I believe in the *Catholic* Church:” and hence, some Roman Catholics venture to argue, when dealing with ignorant persons, that since *their* church is the only one commonly called Catholic, it must be the church intended in the creed. Such an argument could not catch even the most ignorant in some other countries—not in Germany, for instance, where the Protestants [Lutherans] omit the word *Catholic* in their creed, as likely to be mistaken, and because (which is curious enough) it seems to have made no part of the old *Latin* creeds, but to have been first added by the *Greeks*. Nor yet in Russia, Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, &c., because there the Christians of the Greek Church commonly call *themselves* “the Catholics,” distinguishing the adherents of the Bishop of Rome as *Latins*, or *schismatics*, or *heretics*, according as they are disposed to be more or less courteous toward them.

An argument which thus depends for its plausibility upon mere accidental circumstances can hardly be good for much; and all show of plausibility vanishes from this argument as soon as men distinctly understand what the words “Catholic Church” mean. *Catholic* means neither more nor less than *universal*; and the Christian church is so called (specially in opposition to the Jewish) as being unlimited in either *time* or *place*. The Mosaic law, being only a preparation for the gospel, was to come to an *end* on the establishment of the new kingdom of heaven, which was to *continue* to the end of the world. The old dispensation was designed for *one* nation; the *new* for all nations—for mankind *universally*. The old was necessarily connected with some *one place*—Jerusalem, “where men ought to worship;” the new is independent of any particular place. Wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ’s name, “there is he in the midst of them;” Christians themselves, and not buildings or places, being the true temple of God.

Hence, by the way, you may remark that the term “Roman Catholic Church” does (in strictness of speech) imply a contradiction. For *Roman* suggests a necessary connection with one place, and *Catholic* denotes having *no* necessary connection with any one place more than another. However, as the term is an inoffensive way of describing those who think that the whole church should be subject to the Bishop of Rome, there can be no harm in using it in that sense, instead of needlessly exasperating them and ourselves by such terms as *Popery* and *Papists*, which they consider (though without just reason) words of reproach.

2. Another popular plea put forward by Roman Catholics is, that theirs is the *old* religion—ours quite a novelty, founded by Luther and Henry the Eighth. Henry the Eighth seems on these occasions thrown in chiefly to make the charge the more odious,



because he was a hateful tyrant. For any one at all acquainted with English history knows that he was as much opposed to our principles as they are, and would have burned any one who publicly argued against transubstantiation, as unmercifully as his daughter, Queen Mary, whom they acknowledge to have been a Roman Catholic. But it does not much matter how wicked some of the Reformers may have been, since their wickedness, how great soever, is no proof that the religion they opposed was right. Jehu, though a bad man, acted rightly in putting down the worship of Baal; and they must themselves allow that some of their own Popes have been even monsters of iniquity. Nay, their great historian, Cardinal Baronius, makes the infamous lives of those Popes an argument for the truth of their religion; which must (he thinks) have sunk under the scandal of their vices, if it had not been supported by the special providence of God.

But (not to dwell upon these matters) the truth is, that *our* religion is the *old* one, and theirs the *new*; only *their* corruptions do not wear the garb of novelty, because they came in without being perceived, silently and gently, through a long lapse of time; whereas, our *reformation* of them, and restoration of the primitive faith, was made suddenly and all at once. When you scour a room, you remove, in an hour or two, dirt which had been gathering for several days; yet that is only called *keeping it clean*, not changing it; and so, when you wash your face, or brush your clothes. If the corruptions of the Church of Rome had been thrown off one by one, each soon after it came in, no one would have thought such a continual *keeping the church clean* to be innovation. But, because they were left to accumulate too long, and a great general correction had to be made suddenly and at once, therefore the restoration of the old state of things seems, to ignorant people, the bringing in of a new one.

What is called "the change of the *style*" is a striking instance of a seeming *innovation*, which was really a *restoration*; being a return to the right course, by a sudden correction of a great error that had resulted from the accumulation of imperceptibly small ones. The year contains three hundred and sixty-five days and (*almost*) a quarter. To keep the reckoning right, an additional day is inserted in February, every fourth (leap) year, to make up the four quarters of a day. But this addition is *a very little too much*, the excess amounting to three days in every four hundred years. And this continually increasing error went on uncorrected (in this country) till it amounted to eleven days. In the middle of the last century we corrected it, by adopting what is called "the new style," and at once cutting off those days, just as one puts forward the hands of a clock which has lost. But this, though it was in truth only a *restoration* of the true time, appeared



to ignorant people a great and offensive *innovation*, because it was a correction, made all at once, of an error which had crept in by little.

3. Another point which Roman Catholics often press upon our notice is the UNITY OF THE CHURCH. They hold it to be necessary, and appointed by God, that the church, or whole body of Christians at any one time on earth, should form one society, under one government; and hence they argue (not unfairly) that this church must have an earthly head, or supreme governor, whom all Christians are bound to obey—whether that be the Pope alone, or the Pope and a general council (on which points they are divided among themselves); and they urge, that since the Protestant churches are *not* thus united in one society, and they *are*, therefore it is plain that *they* are the ONE universal church which all men should belong to. They forget, when they argue thus, that, even on their own principles, there is at least one other body which has just as good claims to such an unity as this—namely, the Greek Church, which exists (and has subsisted as long as the Roman Catholic) in a great part of Europe, Asia, and Africa. But one needs to trouble oneself the less about the pretensions of either the Greeks or the Roman Catholics, because this whole notion of the unity of the church is quite *unscriptural*.

The Scriptures never teach us to regard the universal church, or body of believers existing at any one time on earth, as, in this sense, one society. They rather teach us to regard believers on earth as *part* of a great society, (church or congregation,) of which the head is in heaven, and of which many of the members only “live unto God,” or exist in his counsels;—some having long since departed, and some being not yet born. Of such a community, *the centre* cannot possibly be on earth: and, accordingly, the apostle Paul expressly distinguishes the Christian church [assembly or congregation] from that of Israel:—“Ye [that is, ye Christians] are not come to the mount that might be touched; [as the Israelites were collected in a great assembly (those of them that *were alive that day*) round Sinai, as a holy place on earth] . . . . . but ye are come to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, *the heavenly Jerusalem*, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.” (Heb. xii. 18–24.) So in the Epistle to the Galatians: “Mount Sinai . . . . answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem *which is above* is free, *which is the mother of us all*.” (Gal. iv. 25, 26.)

Nor does the thought of having one earthly centre of unity, or supreme governor, ever enter into the descriptions of Christian



unity given us in the New Testament. The sacred writers tell us, indeed, that all Christians have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [that is, that all are baptized alike into the same privileges,] one God and Father of all." (Eph. iv. 5, 6.) But they never add, "one pope, one council, one form of government." As a bond of union between the members of particular churches, (or congregations,) Christ *did* ordain that they should meet together to eat of one bread and drink of one cup; but he *did not* institute any assembly of the representatives of all churches, or any rite which would require all churches to confederate together.

All Christians are bound to "live in love," one with another, as children of the same heavenly Father, and disciples of the same Master, even Christ. The universal church may, therefore, be said to be ONE in reference to its supreme HEAD *in heaven*, but it is not one community on earth. And even so, the human race is one in respect of the one Creator and Governor; but this does not make it *one family* or *one state*.

The apostles, indeed, exercised a general government over the various churches which they founded; but it does not appear that they appointed any persons to succeed them in that *general* government. We read of their appointing "elders in every city;" but we do not read of their setting, or intending to set, any one over the whole church. If you look at the account of Paul's taking leave of the elders of Ephesus and Miletus, (Acts xx.,) *whom he expected never to see again*, you will plainly see that he could not possibly have had any notion of any supreme *central authority*, lodged either in the Church of Jerusalem, or of Rome, or in Peter and his successors, or in any *general council*. For he there directly foretells that false teachers should arise out of their own body [that is, from among the clergy], and anxiously impresses on them the best advice he could think of for guarding against such a danger. Yet that advice is only *to watch, and remember what he had taught them*. This seems to imply that each particular church was left sufficient *means* within itself of ascertaining the true doctrine of Christ, continuing, and preserving it; but that the actual preservation of such doctrine depended on the *watchfulness* of the churches themselves. For, the occasion was one on which he could not have failed to bid them have recourse, in case of any difficulties or disputes among themselves, (such as he actually foresaw,) to some central authority, if any such had existed, or were to be set up.

Nor does the Apostle Peter (though writing his second epistle, in the near prospect of death, 2 Pet. i. 14, 15, and anxious to provide a record of his teaching that might last after his decease) say a word to the disciples of the duty of submitting to his successors; but refers them back for guidance to the words of the holy pro-



phets, and the commandment of the apostles, (chap. iii. 2,) and to his own letters, (ibid i.,) and to those of Paul, (15, 16.)

In the beginning of the Revelation of John, too, you will find the Lord addressing *each* of *the seven churches of Asia* as severally independent of any earthly central power, and responsible to him alone for their conduct as Christian churches.

On the whole, then, there is not only no evidence in the New Testament *for* any such central authority, but very strong evidence *against* its being, in any sense, *essential* to the church.

4. But the point which Roman Catholics love most to dwell on is the *weakness of private judgment*, which they represent as a prevailing reason why we should rather give ourselves up to the direction of an infallible guide. In answer to this, several Protestant writers have very well defended the *right* of private judgment: others have preferred to regard it as a *duty*; and, in truth, the exercise of it is both a *right* and a *duty*; or rather, a right *because* it is a duty. But the most important consideration of all is the *necessity* of private judgment. A man who resolves to place himself under a certain guide to be implicitly followed, and decides that such and such a church is the appointed infallible guide, does decide on his own private judgment, *that one* most important point, which includes in it all other decisions relative to religion. And if, by his own showing, he is *unfit to judge* at all, he can have no ground for confidence that he has decided rightly in that; and if, accordingly, he will not trust himself to judge even on this point, but resolves to consult his priest, or some other friends, and be led entirely by *their* judgment thereupon, still he does, in thus resolving, exercise his own judgment as to the counsellors he so relies on. The responsibility of forming some judgment is one which, however unfit we may deem ourselves to bear it, we cannot possibly get rid of, in any matter about which we really feel an anxious care. It is laid upon us by God, and we cannot shake it off. Before a man can rationally *judge* that he should *submit his judgment* in other things to the Church of Rome, he must first have judged, 1. That there is a God; 2. That Christianity comes from God; 3. That Christ has promised to give an infallible authority in the church; 4. That such authority resides in the Church of Rome. Now, to say that men who are competent to form sound judgments upon these points are quite incompetent to form sound judgments about any other matters in religion, is very like saying, that men may have sound judgments of their own *before* they enter the Church of Rome, but that they *lose* all sound judgment entirely from the moment they enter it.

The true use of this topic of the weakness of private judgment is, to make us modest in our decisions,—not pretending to more certainty than we have, or claiming any absolute security from



error ; and diligent in seeking all we can to inform and strengthen our judgments. Thus, when the apostles found men “babes” and “weak,” they were not content to leave them so ; but trained and instructed them till they became “full-grown men,” and “exercised their senses,” [powers of discrimination,] that they might “by use” be able to “distinguish good and evil.” And, when addressing such persons, they “spoke as to wise men,” and bade them “judge what was said ;” commanding them to “prove [try] all things, and hold fast what was good.”

5. But Roman Catholics sometimes tell us that there is in the New Testament the express command, “Hear the church ;” and that therefore we are bound to submit implicitly to the church’s decisions upon all points of doctrine. There is nothing more necessary, in answer to this, than to lay before you the text which is profanely *caricatured* in this argument.

“If thy brother shall *trespass against thee*, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone ; if he shall *hear thee*, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to *hear them*, tell it unto the church ; but if he neglect to *hear the church*, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” (Matt. xviii. 15–17.) Here it is manifest that (not doctrines, but) disputes between man and man are spoken of ; and that the church mentioned is (not the universal, but) some particular church or congregation. Now the Roman Catholics themselves do not believe that the decisions of particular congregations are infallibly true.

6. Again, when Roman Catholics would persuade us to receive their *traditions* of doctrine as certain truths, without examining them by the test of Scripture, they are fond of reminding us that it is by *tradition* only that we have the Scriptures themselves. But when you meet such persons, you may ask them whether they would as readily believe the correctness of a report transmitted by *word of mouth in popular rumours*, from one end of the kingdom to another, as if it came in a *letter*, passed from one person to another over the same space ? Would they think, that because they could trust most servants to deliver a letter, however long or important, *therefore*, they could trust the same men to deliver the contents of a long and important letter in a message by word of mouth ? Let me put a familiar case. A footman brings you a letter from a friend, upon whose word you can perfectly rely, giving an account of something that has happened to himself, and the exact account of which you are greatly concerned to know. While you are reading and answering the letter, the footman goes into the kitchen, and there gives your cook an account of the same thing, which, he says, he overheard the upper-servants at home talking



over, as related to them by the valet, who said he had it from your friend's son's own lips. The cook retails the story to your groom, and he, in turn, tells you. Would you judge of that *story* by the letter, or the *letter* by the story?

The case of the Jewish Church is an apt illustration of the difference of security in the tradition of Scripture and the tradition of doctrine. The Jews, we know, faithfully preserved the writings of the Old Testament, which were intrusted to them. Nor do Christ and his apostles ever charge them with corrupting or destroying their sacred books, as no doubt they would have done, if the Jews had been guilty of any such crime. But our Saviour *does* blame them for "making the Word of God of none effect by their traditions," and "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Might not the Jews argue, in their turn, that if we receive the Old Testament from them, we should also receive their traditions? the *oral* law (as they call it) no less than the *written* law? But our Saviour always teaches the people to bring the traditions of the elders to the test of the written word.

But besides the uncertainty of traditions which *are* received in the Church of Rome, there is an *additional* uncertainty to each individual Roman Catholic, *what* are so received. If he asks his priest why such or such a point is believed, or thing done, and is told, "Such is the tradition of the church," let him ask again, "How did *you* learn that?" It will be found, by pushing such inquiries, that the priest learned it from a book, which *reports* that something has been *reported* by one of the ancient fathers, as having been *reported* to him, as believed by those who had heard it *reported* that the apostles taught it.

Are we then to reject tradition altogether? The question is as foolish as if you were to ask whether *books* or whether *witnesses* are to be believed or not. Some things said by them are true, some are false, and many mixed. It is just the same with traditions. The *test* is Scripture; not only because written accounts are, in their nature, more to be relied upon than reports by word of mouth, but also because it is plain that the apostles and evangelists *wrote* their books to guard against the uncertainties of mere tradition. Thus Luke tells Theophilus\* that he had written an account of our Lord's life and teaching, that Theophilus "might know the *certainly* [the exact state of the case] of those things wherein he had been instructed." And John and Paul, upon two occasions,† correct false reports (that is, traditions) which had gone abroad among Christians even in their own day.

It is a foolish thing to say that tradition is to be held to rather than Scripture, *because* tradition was before Scripture; since

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\* Luke i. 3, 4.

† John xxi. 23; 2 Thess. ii. 1-5.



Scripture [*i. e.* written records] was used on purpose, *after tradition had been tried*, to guard against the dangers of tradition. Thus, to prefer, therefore, the imperfect thing [tradition] to the more perfect improvement on it [Scripture], reminds one of the excuse made by dirty feeders, that “fingers were *made before forks*.”

Tradition, then, is not the *interpreter of Scripture*, but Scripture is the *interpreter of tradition*. What has come down to us for tradition, if agreeable to Scripture, is to be received; if opposed to it, to be rejected; if neither, is to be left in uncertainty.

But the Roman Catholic traditions have partly *contradicted*, and partly *gone beyond* Scripture, and partly *perverted* its obvious sense, as I will point out in my next address to you.

7. The Roman Catholics are fond of boasting that *their church is unchangeable*; and you will sometimes meet this same assertion respecting the Church of Rome not only admitted, but even put forward by Protestants, when they wish to fasten upon the Roman Catholics of the present day some charge that might have been truly brought against persons of that communion long ago. But Roman Catholics act much more wisely than Protestants in making this assertion; for the Roman Church was certainly a pure one in the apostles' times, and if it has *never* changed since then, how can it be corrupt now? The Protestants, indeed, will answer, “Oh yes, it has, only not *since* it became corrupt; nor ever can.” But this also gives an advantage to the Roman Catholic. For, if all the monstrous list of (alleged) corruptions came *in at once*, and have never altered since, surely one should be able to point out *when* this *mighty change* took place; or, if not (which is clearly impossible) it will follow that it *never did take place at all*.

The truth is, however, that the Church of Rome has been frequently changing, and the corruptions crept in *gradually*, and a few at a time; and thence, no one can say when *they began*, any more than one can say when a man or a garment begins to be *old*. Only, on comparing the present Church of Rome with Scripture, it becomes plain that vast alterations *have* taken place.

When you meet with a Roman Catholic who boasts of his church as *unchangeable*, you may ask him, what church translated the Scriptures into Latin? and for *what purpose*? He will (if he knows any thing at all about the matter) be forced to confess that the Scriptures were translated into Latin by the Church of Rome (or persons in communion with it) for the purpose of being read, both privately and in the public meetings of the church, in a language *understood by the people*—Latin being then the language commonly spoken in the West of Europe and North Africa. Yet the Church of Rome *now* reads the lessons in the public service in Latin, though it is *not understood* by the people; and it is only



since the *Reformation* that Roman Catholics have been at all diligent to translate the Bible into languages understood by the common people, or to circulate such translations.

You might ask him, too, if there was not a time when all the chief teachers of his church—from the Pope down to the parish priest—taught men that it was the *duty* of true believers to *persecute* heretics? and he will be forced to own that there was. You may observe to him, therefore, that, if any one then found out the duty of toleration, it must have been by private judgment in opposition to the guides of the church; and that, if the duty of toleration is now owned by Roman Catholics, (as it has been owned by many of them *since the Reformation*,) that is a *great change*, and a change made by private judgment entirely; since the popes and councils of the Church of Rome have never *declared* that persecuting heretics is *not* a duty, and that tolerating them *is*.

8. Roman Catholics are also apt to boast of their church's freedom from *divisions* and dissension. But in this they manifestly contradict their own claim to be the Catholic (universal) church. For, if they regard Protestants as members—though revolted members—of their church, then the very existence of Protestants (to say nothing of the Greek, the Armenian, and other churches) proves that their church is not exempt from divisions and dissensions. If they say that the doctrine and proceedings of Protestants, &c., are *condemned* by the authorities of the Church of Rome, and all its *sound* members, that is no answer to the objection. For, *exemption* from a certain evil must consist, not in its being *censured* when it arises, but in its *not arising* at all. Indeed, it would be very easy, and also quite trifling, for any church whatever to set up the boast that its doctrines are received by all, except those who dissent from them; and that all submit to its authority, except those who refuse submission. Doubtless, if all mankind, or any number of men, would but come to a perfect agreement in *any* one religion—be it *true* or *false*—they could not but be exempt from religious dissension, and, if not from error, at least from any thing that they themselves would account an error.

What would be thought if an Englishman were to boast to a Hindoo or a Chinese, that London enjoys the happiness of being exempt from all crimes, and also from conflagrations; and should afterward explain his meaning to be, that all crimes are forbidden by law; the person offending being liable, when detected and taken up, to be punished as the law directs; and that, though fires do break out from time to time, there are fire-engines ready to be called out on such occasions?

However, it is not true that the Church of Rome is, even in their own sense of the word, exempt from *divisions* and dissensions. The great means of unity, according to most of them, is the autho-



city of the Pope; yet they are not agreed among themselves about the extent of the Pope's authority—some thinking the Pope infallible, others denying that he is; some making him superior to a general council, others inferior, &c. Nay, learned men have reckoned up at least twenty-four fierce schisms\* and dissensions (some of them very bloody) about *who* was Pope; when several rivals each claimed to be the true Pope, and condemned all others as impostors. Again, they are divided among themselves about many of the same things as Protestants are divided about; as free will, predestination, &c.; besides many disputes which have no place among *us*.

Lately there has appeared in Ireland a remarkable division among the bishops of the Roman Catholic church there,—a tract on the Evidences of Christianity, which merely sets forth some strong reasons for believing the Christian religion to be true, being sanctioned by one prelate, and denounced by another. The fact is, that, besides other differences, there are some Roman Catholics who are sincere believers in the truth (at least) of Christianity; and *these* think it a good thing to set before men the proofs of it; others of them either believe or strongly suspect that it is a fable of man's devising, though a very useful delusion; and these are afraid of inquiry and reasoning, which they think would shake men's faith; and so prefer basing the truth of Christianity on the authority of the church, and trusting that men will never think of asking, "If the authority of the church does not rest on the truth of Christianity, on what does it?"

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## No. III.

MY DEAR FRIENDS:—

I trust that you are better qualified than I fear some others are, to detect and expose the arts by which any one may seek to seduce you into the Romish communion; for I have always encouraged, and endeavoured to teach you, to "prove (that is, try) all things," and hold fast that which is right.

Some well-meaning men, on the contrary, exhort their people to believe what they are told, without seeking any reason for it, thinking this would unsettle their minds. They forget that such people (1) may be easily brought to believe, on equally good grounds—that is, from being *earnestly assured* of it—in Romanism or Mormonism, or any

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\* One of these lasted from 1378 to 1429, more than half a century.



thing else: and (2) that, if any of them do begin to reflect at all, they will think there is a strong presumption against the truth of Christianity, or of *our* doctrines, from their defenders being afraid of inquiry. Certainly, if the teachers of any religion really *were* conscious that the religion which they taught could not stand an examination into its evidence, and had no good reasons to support it, discouraging all inquiry, and desiring people to believe without proof shown, would be just the course that such teachers would be likely to follow. In point of fact, it is the course which the teachers of false religions commonly do follow. When a young man, therefore, who has been brought up to believe in Christianity without a reason for his belief, and has even been told, that to ask for for any reason of the hope that is in him is wrong and impious,—when such a young man comes to hear that other people, in other countries, are trained in the same way to believe quite contrary things to what he has been taught, he is naturally led to suspect that *all* religions stand on the same foot; that “priests of all religions” are “the same” crafty impostors; and that, since *all* follow the same method of getting men to believe without a reason, it is because none of them have any good reason to give.

Accordingly, since such a course is always likely to favour infidelity in the long run, infidels are ever ready to join with weak Christians, in alleging, that believing without any reason is true Christian faith—being sure that, if this point be once settled, they will have no difficulty in convincing any rational person that true Christian faith is the most absurd thing in the world.

But true Christian faith is that which Jesus Christ and his apostles required and commended; and you will find, in the New Testament, that they never required or commended belief without evidence. On the contrary, they blamed the Jews and the heathens for taking on trust what they had merely “received by tradition from their fathers,” and suffering themselves “to be carried away even as they were led;” and they never put forward their own doctrines without giving sufficient proof of their truth. Thus our Lord constantly appealed to the evidence of his miracles, and of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which the Jews (with whom he was reasoning) acknowledged to be divinely inspired. The apostles, besides such proofs as these, came forward as WITNESSES of his resurrection; and they have delivered down their testimony to that and other miraculous facts in the writings of the New Testament. “These things,” says the Evangelist John, speaking of Christ’s miracles wrought in the presence of his disciples, “are written *that ye might believe*, and that, *believing*, ye might have life through his name.” In these words that apostle plainly declares that faith was to be grounded upon evidence; and that such a faith, so grounded upon the evidence of miracles, was true Christian *saving*



faith. He was, consequently, of a quite different opinion from those who would persuade us, that though our faith may be *vindicated* by an appeal to the evidence of miracles, it should not be *grounded* on that evidence, and is mere worthless *historic* faith (as they call it) if it is so grounded.

Sometimes, in the New Testament, persons seem to be blamed for demanding, before they would believe, *more* proof than had been given them; but that is plainly because refusing to believe when we have *sufficiently* good proof already, is a mark of a *prejudiced* mind. We should be glad, indeed, to get all the proof we can; but we have no right to say that we will not attend to, or be determined by, good evidence, because it is not the very strongest we can think of. Those who were so obstinately bent on their old prejudices of a conquering Messiah, and so tenacious of "the traditions of the elders," that nothing but the most forcible proofs could *extort*, as it were, from them belief in Jesus Christ, were plainly less to be commended than candid, truth-loving persons, who received him as soon as ever they were shown *sufficient* evidence of his having been sent from God.

*You* will not, then, be disturbed by men's pretending that you should not attempt to reason about religion, because you are not "expert logicians." Logic and grammar are excellent and useful things; but men may be able to reason without having studied logic, as they may be able to talk good English without being skilful grammarians. The rules of logic were discovered by *observing* what men did when they reasoned correctly; so that men must have been able to reason before logic was invented; and the invention of logic has not surely *taken away* from men any power which they had before.

Nicodemus, and the blind man, of whom the Evangelist John tells us, had probably, neither of them, ever heard of *syllogism*—(which is the name by which logicians call a process of reasoning)—yet they argued correctly enough when they said that Jesus was a teacher sent from God, because he did such miracles. People would laugh at a man who should tell them that a jury could not try a cause, or a farmer judge what crops would suit his ground, because they had not learned logic. Yet neither the jury nor the farmer can come to any conclusion without *reasoning*.

But the most absurd thing of all is, that it is always by some *reason* or other that these persons seek to persuade you to *renounce your reason*; to *argue* men into *neglecting arguments*; and *prove* to them that they *cannot judge of proofs*.

If any one who has turned Roman Catholic, or has been so brought up, exhorts you to change your religion, assuring you that you ought to submit your judgment to that of the holy church, since you are not *competent to judge* of religious questions yourself,



ask him, *Why* should I do so? Ought I to change my religion without any *reason* for it—without knowing whether I may not be embracing falsehood and blasphemy? Then, if he proceeds to offer you reasons for it, stop him on the onset by asking, *Am* I then competent to judge of good or bad reasons?

If he answer in the affirmative, (thus giving up his original point,) you may claim the right of bringing the doctrine of his church to the *test* of Scripture. Now, there are many points in the teaching of the Church of Rome which, when it is examined by this test, will at once be discovered to be unsound. I will take this opportunity of mentioning some of them.

1. For example, no one church appears to have borne rule over all the churches Paul founded. (1.) He speaks of *himself* as having “the care of all the churches” which he had founded resting upon him; but never refers to the Church of Rome, or the Apostle Peter, as having any superintendence over him, or the churches founded by him. We find him speaking of “the apostleship of the uncircumcision being committed unto” himself—that is, of his being specially called to preach and found churches among the Gentiles, and specially blessed with success in that work; while “the apostleship of the circumcision” was, in the same way, “committed unto Peter.” We find that he was so far from submitting to Peter as a decisive authority, that, on the contrary, on one occasion he withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed: and, in writing to the church at Rome, he never drops a hint of its then having, or being destined to have, any the least authority or pre-eminence over other churches. Nor is there the least trace, throughout the whole of the New Testament, of Peter’s exercising any act of sovereignty over all the churches. But if Peter had been, as the Roman Catholics say, the sovereign of the whole church, and the vicar of Christ upon earth, it is not credible that in the history of that church which he governed, and in his own letters, and in the letters of the other apostles, (who must then have acted under his control,) there should be no mention at all ever made of his having or exercising such a sovereignty. Peter, indeed, is so far from being described, in the Acts of the Apostles, as *sending* the other apostles where he would, that we read of their *sending him*, along with John, to confirm the church in Samaria. Acts viii. 14. So that, to say that Peter had the same supremacy over the whole church as the popes now claim, is not only to say more than can be proved by Scripture, but to say what can be *disproved* by Scripture; since if he really had that supremacy, and if knowing him to have had it were a matter of the greatest importance, it could not but have been referred to in the Scripture history and the writings of the apostles, just as the acts and authority of Pius IX. as Pope could not but be mentioned by any



zealous Roman Catholic relating the history of that church in the year 1850; or the royal acts of Queen Victoria, by an historian who professed to give an account of the state of England during her reign. However distinguished, then, Peter was among the apostles, he certainly was not their sovereign; and therefore, when Roman Catholics cite places of Scripture in which Peter is put first among the apostles, or is spoken of as most forward on any occasion, or mentioned with some special honour, you may tell them that all this is nothing at all to the purpose, because it does not prove that Peter had any control or authority over the rest, any more than the foreman of a jury has over the rest of the panel.\*

(2.) But the Roman Catholics maintain, not only that Peter had this supremacy, but that it has passed from him to the bishops of Rome, who, they say, succeed Peter in all the fulness of his *apostolic* office. But this is mere pretence. It cannot be proved from Scripture that Peter was ever at Rome, much less that he was bishop of the church in that city. If he was Bishop of Rome, the bishops of Rome may be his *successors in the bishopric* (and so may be the bishops of Antioch, too, for he is said to have been bishop there also before he went to Rome) but not as *apostles*; any more than the successors in the peerage of a rector of a parish who happens to be a peer, are his successors as *rectors*, or the rectors as *peers*. Queen Victoria succeeded King William IV. in Britain, as the Duke of Cumberland did in Hanover; but Queen Victoria did not succeed him as sovereign of Hanover, nor the King of Hanover as sovereign of Britain. It is never said in Scripture that the apostles were to have successors *as apostles*; but, on the contrary, it is implied that they were not. For the chief part of their apostolic dignity consisted in their being witnesses of Christ's resurrection—having “seen Jesus Christ the Lord”—and in the miraculous gifts of the Spirit with which they were endowed, and in their power of bestowing these on others. Now, these qualifications of an apostle have not been imparted to the bishops of Rome, or to any one else, since the true apostles died. If, then, the Pope, or any other person, claims to be an apostle in the same sense as Peter was, you may fairly require him to show you, as Peter did, “the signs of an apostle,” before you admit his pretensions.

2. Again, the invocation of *departed* saints, and especially of the blessed Virgin Mary, as practised in the Church of Rome, is a

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\* As for our Lord's promise to Peter, “Upon this *rock* I will build my church,” it is plain that the same privilege was afterward conferred on *all* the apostles; who are spoken of as, together with Christ, “the corner-stone,” the *foundation* of the church. Eph. ii. 20. Compare Rev. xxi. 14. And the promise, “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth,” &c., Matthew xvi. 19, is afterward made to *all* the apostles, Matthew xviii. 18.



thing plainly contrary to the spirit of the gospel. For—not to mention that it is at least very doubtful as to some of their so-called saints, whether they ever existed at all—and as to others, whether they were not mere crazy fanatics—and as to others, whether they were not very wicked men—not to mention this, and supposing these “saints” to have been all really good Christians, you will readily see that asking a *dead* person to pray for you, when you do not know him to be present, is quite a different thing from asking a *living* person to pray for you. The Scriptures never tell us that the dead can hear or know the requests which men make to them; so that asking their prayers *at all* is a piece of “will-worship” that cannot be justified. We might, for all that appears, just as reasonably go down on our knees and ask a good man in America to pray for us. But when it came to be believed that a holy person, when *removed from earth*, can hear the addresses of thousands and millions calling on him in all parts of the world, and can know the secret dispositions of mind in each several person that invokes him, this belief did, in fact, *deify* him. Whatever subtle explanations may be attempted of the way in which “glorified saints” are able to hear, from various regions, and repeat, more prayers in the day than there are minutes in the twenty-four hours, it is plain that at least the great mass of their worshippers must regard them no less as *gods* than the ancient pagans did the beings they worshipped. For the pagans acknowledged that many of the gods whom they worshipped had been MEN; only they fancied that, after death, their souls had obtained great power and influence over the management of things in the world—which is what was meant by calling them *gods*.

Now, as the Almighty has declared himself to be “A JEALOUS GOD”—just as unwilling to have his honour impaired as if he were jealous of it—and as he always treated the conduct of the pagans in thus praying to dead men as idolatry, it cannot be safe in us to encourage any thing like a practice which he abhors; particularly as, even if the saints *can* hear our prayers, there is plainly no *necessity* for praying to them, since God invites us at all times to “come boldly” to himself, through the one Mediator, Jesus Christ. It is much *safer*, then, certainly, *not* to pray to the saints, if God has not required us to do so, than to invoke them, especially (as the Roman Catholics do) in the same posture, at the same time, in the same place, and even in the same form of words as we invoke God Almighty.

Now, God has nowhere in Scripture required us to invoke the saints. On the contrary, the New Testament seems framed purposely to guard all who are sincerely desirous of following its guidance against such a practice. Though we find, in the book of Acts, narratives of the deaths of the two martyrs, Stephen, and



James the Apostle, the brother of John, there is no mention of their being invoked after death. And when God saw fit to convey his commands to Cornelius, and again to Paul (Acts x. and xxvii.) by a created being, it is not one of those blessed martyrs, but an angel that is sent.

The Virgin Mary, again, is never (but once)\* so much as named throughout the Acts and apostolic epistles. Now, this silence respecting her is utterly inconceivable, supposing it had been the practice of the early Christians to pray to her. In the gospels, again, she is but rarely mentioned. And on three of the most remarkable occasions on which she is mentioned, it is apparently on purpose to discourage any thing like adoration of her. At the marriage-feast at Cana, our Lord checks her interference. (John ii. 3, 4.) And on the two other occasions, (Matt. xii. 50, Luke xi. 27,) he takes pains to impress upon his hearers that, in his sight, the ties of kindred are as nothing in comparison of obedience to God's will.

3. Again, the practice of reading the Scriptures and reciting the prayers in the public assemblies of the church in an *unknown tongue*, is not only contrary to reason and Scripture, but even to the former practice of the Church of Rome itself.

What the Apostle Paul says, Cor. xiv., is sufficient by itself to show this practice to be contrary *both* to Scripture and to reason; since he there not only forbids such a practice by his authority, but proves it, by plain arguments, to be absurd.

It appears that some of those persons who had been miraculously enabled to speak foreign languages, (called in that chapter *unknown tongues*, because their meaning was *unknown* to the common people at Corinth,) were fond of showing off the power which they enjoyed by publicly praying, and addressing discourses to the congregation in those strange tongues, without, at the same time, explaining the sense of what they said. This practice the apostle condemns as absurd. He shows that the object of words spoken is to be understood; that they are *signs* which stand for something else; and that a sign is of no value unless it can be known what it *signifies*, (Cor. vii. 9.) He observes that, when a minister prays or blesses God in a foreign language, the unlearned part of the congregation cannot (reasonably) express their assent by saying *Amen*, since they do not understand what he says. For his own part, he declares that in the church [congregation], he had rather speak five words with his understanding [that is, so as to convey his mind to others] than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. He puts the case of a stranger coming into one of their assemblies,

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\* Acts i. 14.



and observing ministers speaking publicly in a language not understood by the people, and he asks, "Would he not say that ye were mad?"

Now all this applies still more strongly to the practice of the Roman Catholics. They have not the excuse (such as it was) of saying, that the priest's knowledge of Latin is a miraculous gift, the public display of which might redound to the glory of God. Nor has it been always the case with them that even the priests themselves understood the Latin prayers and lessons which they read; as Paul allows that those gifted persons were themselves edified by what they spoke in strange languages. But in other respects, the cases are alike; and if the Apostle Paul were to come into a Roman Catholic chapel, during the time of mass, and find the priest inviting the people, in an unknown tongue, to pray with him, then going on to pray as if they were joining him, but still in an unknown tongue, and then, turning about, apparently to be well heard, and reading them a lesson out of Scripture, in a language which they did not understand—it is hard to suppose he would think that those who did thus "held fast the traditions which he had delivered to them." Indeed, this practice of the Roman Catholics is so flagrantly unreasonable, that they themselves would have perceived its absurdity, and probably refused to bear with it, if it had been introduced all *at once*. But it was not. It *grew up* imperceptibly, through a long course of years. It was not caused by men's having from the first a superstitious dread of any attempt to translate the Scriptures at all. For if so, the Roman Church would not have *translated* them into Latin, but left them in the original Hebrew and Greek. But the Scriptures were *translated* into Latin, when that was the prevailing language, on *purpose* that they might be accessible to the people. And they were publicly read in *Latin* that the people might understand them; and the prayers were said in Latin for the same reason. Afterward, when Latin gradually ceased to be spoken—first in the provinces, and then even at Rome itself—still divine services continued to be performed in that language. Thus, though time had changed the Latin from a *well-known* to an *unknown* language, people fancied that they were *keeping things as they were*, because the service was still read in Latin. But since it was first read in Latin in order that the people might understand it, continuing to read it in Latin, when the people no longer understood that language, is clearly *a change of principles*, which is a much more serious thing than any mere change of practice.

Latterly, indeed, since the Reformation, the Roman Catholics have, to some extent, *changed again*. For they allow, in some places, translations of the Scriptures into the common languages of different countries, to be circulated more or less freely, accord-



ing to circumstances, and they have printed prayer-books with translations of the Latin prayers; and in some parts of England they perform some of their public worship (though not the *mass*) in English.

Now this is, in fact, acknowledging that their former practice was wrong; and it is probable that they would now permit even the mass to be said in English here, if a decree of the Council of Trent (which they regard as *infallible*) did not stand in their way.

That decree is altogether such a curious one, that a Protestant can hardly read it without smiling. It is as follows: "*Though the mass contains great instruction to the faithful, yet it has not seemed good to the Fathers that it should everywhere be celebrated in the vulgar tongue. Wherefore, retaining everywhere the ancient custom of each church, approved by the holy Roman Church, the mother and mistress of all churches, lest the sheep of Christ should be famished, and the little ones ask bread and there be none to break it to them, the holy synod commands the pastors, and all who have the cure of souls, that they shall frequently during the celebration of mass, either by themselves or others, explain some part of what is read in the mass; and, among other things, declare some mystery of this most holy sacrifice, especially on Sundays and festivals.*" And they add—"If any shall say that the mass should only be celebrated in the vulgar tongue, let him be accursed!"

Yet some Roman Catholics are so far from seeing the absurdity of this, (or at least from *owning* it,) that it has even been made a matter of boast by some of them, that, in a foreign country, a priest going thither ignorant of its language, can at once perform service as at home; and that a traveller, equally ignorant of the language of the country, can attend the service of the church, which is the same everywhere; while a member of any other communion would be at a loss.

This is as if a blind man should make it a matter of boast that he is not incommoded by the short days of winter, and has no occasion for candles. That day and night are alike to him, would indeed be an advantage, if he could see in *both*, but not when the case is that he can see in *neither*.

4. Another point in which the teaching of the Church of Rome is plainly contrary to Scripture is *transubstantiation*.

Roman Catholics hold that, when Christ, at the last supper, taking the bread in his hands, said, "This is my body," he meant—"This is no longer bread, but is changed into my body." Such, they say, is the *natural*, because *literal* sense of the words.

(1.) But even if it were the *literal* sense, it would not follow from that that it was the *natural* sense of the words. Because the natural sense is that (whether figurative or literal) in which the persons, who heard Him speaking at the time, would *naturally* and reason-



ably understand his words. For instance, when, on the same occasion, our Lord said, "This *cup* is the New Testament [covenant] in my blood,"—neither the Roman Catholics nor we suppose that he meant to speak literally of *the cup* which he held in his hands; but we both agree that here "the cup" is put, by a common figure, for the *cup-full of wine*, which the company were drinking. In this case, therefore, we both agree that the *figurative* sense (not the *literal*) is the *natural* meaning of our Saviour's words. Again, if in explaining a map, I were to point to a part of it and say, "This is France," no one would think that I meant that a part of that sheet of paper or canvas was *literally* France; that would not be the natural sense of my words. Nor, if I showed you a picture, and said, "That is the queen," would you think I meant to say that it was *literally* Queen Victoria?

Now it would not have naturally occurred to the apostles, when they heard Christ say of the bread, "This is my body," and saw it continue in his hands just the same, to all appearance, as it was before, and when they ate it up, that he was then working a miracle,—that he was holding his own body in his own hands, and that they were, each of them, eating up his body, while he sat there all the while conversing with them. But, on the contrary, they would *naturally* have understood him to be speaking *figuratively*, because they knew that he was then appointing a religious rite, and they, as Jews, were quite accustomed to figurative religious rites. Indeed, they had just been celebrating one such figurative religious rite—the Passover—in which a lamb was eaten, *representing* the Lamb which their forefathers had sacrificed on the night they left Egypt; and *bitter* herbs, *representing* the affliction they had been under; and *unleavened* bread, *representing* the hastily-made bread which they took with them in their flight, when there was no time to leaven it. And it is the custom still among the Jews for the master of every household to explain to his family, when eating the Passover, the meaning of the rite—saying, for example, when the bitter herbs are laid on the table, "This is the food of affliction which our fathers ate in Egypt," &c. &c. The apostles, therefore, would naturally have understood our Saviour to be, in the same way, explaining the meaning of a figurative rite of his religion, and would have taken him to mean—"This bread *represents*, or stands for, my body," &c. &c. For such a way of speaking is quite common, and was often used by our Lord, when explaining figures. So, in explaining the parable of the Tares in the field, he says: "The field is the world—the good seed is the children of the kingdom—the tares *are* the children of the wicked one—the reapers *are* the angels," &c. Meaning that the field of which he had been speaking stood for, or represented the world; and so of the rest. The apostles, who had often heard Jesus speak thus be-



fore, would, therefore, have naturally understood him to be speaking in the same way then.

(2.) Did they, then, learn afterward to put another meaning on his words? On the contrary, we find Paul expressly calling that which is eaten in the communion, “bread,” even after it has been solemnly set apart as the sign of Christ’s body. “The *bread* which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one *bread* and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread [loaf].” (1 Cor. x. 16, 17.) And again: “As often as ye eat *this bread* and drink this cup, ye do *show the Lord’s death* till he come. *Wherefore*, whosoever shall eat this *bread* and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily [in a manner unworthy of the solemn rite] is guilty of [*that is*, is culpable in respect of] the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that *bread* and drink of that cup.” (xi. 26, 27, 28.) Where he distinctly explains that it is *because*, in eating the bread and drinking the wine at the communion, we *show forth*—exhibit the representation of the Lord’s death, *therefore* he who partakes of it rashly and indecently, as you will find from that chapter the Corinthians did, is guilty of an insult to the Lord’s body and blood, not of mere indecorum at a common meal. The Apostle Paul, then, plainly calls what is eaten at the Lord’s supper *bread*, even after it had been made a sign or symbol of the Lord’s body. In answer to this, the Roman Catholics say that the apostle speaks *figuratively*—calling it *bread*, because it once was, and still appears so. But it is very strange that men should choose to suspect a figure, in calling that bread, which certainly was, and still seems to all a man’s senses to be real bread; and yet not to suspect any figure in calling that Christ’s body, which was made by a baker, and neither had nor assumes any resemblance whatever to human flesh.

(3.) But, indeed, the meaning which they, when they explain themselves, give to Christ’s words is not, after all, the *literal* meaning of them. For, in common speech, we describe things, not by their substances, (of which we know nothing directly,) but by their qualities. We call that bread which has such a colour, smell, taste, power of nourishing, and so forth. No one would think of calling a mole-hill a mountain, though all the matter of the mountain were pressed into the size of a mole-hill. We should say, in that case, that the mountain had become, or shrunk into, a mole-hill. So, when Moses’s rod assumed the appearance of a serpent, it is said that his rod became a serpent; not that a serpent became his rod. Now, according to the Roman Catholics, the *substance* of Christ’s body in the communion has none of the *attributes* of flesh, but appears under all the *attributes* of *bread*. Therefore, in ordinary speech, we should say that Christ’s body becomes bread; not that



bread becomes Christ's body. To suppose our Lord, when he says "This is my body," to mean "the *substance* of this bread, without a change in any of its qualities, is changed into the *substance* of my body, only *without* any one outward quality of flesh," is certainly not to suppose him to speak *literally*, but in the most dark and perplexed (not to say unintelligible) language that ever was uttered. And to say that this is a *natural* and *obvious* meaning of his words, is what scarce any one would venture to say who had not been carefully *trained up* to believe it such.

5. Again, the Roman Catholics maintain that their clergy are PRIESTS in that sense of the word in which it means persons who offer up real expiatory *sacrifices* for the people.

You must remember that this word *priest* has two very different meanings, which are very often confounded.

Originally, *priest* was only a contraction [or shortening] of the word *presbyter*; and it meant properly the same as presbyter; that is, *an elder* of the church. In this sense it is used in our prayer-books, wherever our clergy are called *priests*; priests, or presbyters, being the middle rank of our clergy, above deacons and below bishops.

But *priest*, in another meaning of the word, means a person appointed to offer up sacrifices to God for others: and in this sense it is used in our translation of the Bible, in which the word *elder* is put in place of it wherever presbyters are spoken of. In the English *Bible*, therefore, PRIEST means a *sacrificer*: in the English *prayer-book*, PRIEST means an *elder*, or presbyter.

Now, the Roman Catholics say that their priests are *sacrificers*. For they think that, in the communion, the priest offers up the real body and blood of Christ as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. And they deem the power of *making* (so they express it) the body and blood of Christ, the great power of the priesthood; and the office of offering them as a sacrifice to God the most dignified office of the priesthood.

The question is, Did the apostles agree with them?

Now, throughout the whole New Testament, the sacred writers speak of no [sacrificing] *priest* under the gospel-scheme, but Jesus Christ himself; and they do continually tell us that he is *our priest*. They speak of no atoning sacrifice, but the one oblation of Christ *once offered* for our sins; and they tell us that, by that sacrifice, sin has been *for ever put away*; that is, all obstacles to the free pardon of sin, on repentance, removed entirely. They speak of no altar but that in heaven—"the holy place, not made with hands."

Nor is this all; but, even when searching for a parallel in the Christian worship to the sacrifices of the law, and for something in the Christian ministry corresponding to the priestly office—even in



such *figurative* allusions to the rites of the Old Testament—their minds never turn to the eucharist [Lord's supper] as a thing that should be, even *figuratively*, described as a sacrifice. Thus (Heb. xiii. 15, 16) the Apostle Paul describes the sort of sacrifices which Christians can offer, as *contrasted with those of the Jews*. “By Christ [through *him*, not through our clergy] let us offer the *sacrifice of praise* to God continually, *even the fruit of our lips*, giving thanks to his name. But *to do good* and to *communicate* [impart of our wealth to our needy brethren] forget not; for with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased.” And again, (Rom. xii. 1,) “I beseech you . . . that ye present your bodies a *living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable [rational] service.” Following out the same thought, (of Christians being themselves a sacrifice to God,) the *preacher* who, by publishing the gospel and persuading men to receive it, makes his converts such an *acceptable sacrifice*, is, in one place, *figuratively* described as, in that respect, resembling a priest. In Rom. xv. 16, Paul describes himself as “*ministering* [in respect of] the gospel of God, that the offering up [oblation] of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have, therefore,” he adds, “whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in things pertaining to God.” All which he further explains in the next verses, by relating how God had enabled him to *make the Gentiles obedient*, and to *preach the gospel* more extensively among the Gentiles than any one else had. Thus you see that, when Paul is actually *searching* for something in his own office to parallel with the functions of a priest, it is to his character as a preacher of the gospel—as a converter of men [the living sacrifices] to God—that his mind turns; and not to the privilege of consecrating the bread and wine in the communion.

Nor is there, from one end to the other of the New Testament, the least allusion to that privilege as (I do not say the chief, but) any *exclusive privilege* of the Christian ministry at all. The duties and dignities of the ministry are described often and largely by the apostles; but the mysterious power of *making the body and blood* of Christ, and offering it up for sins, is never so much as glanced at in a single passage.

Now, it is quite incredible that, if the apostles really believed that there were sacrificing priests under the gospel-system, they should never have spoken about them at all. Such silence on such a subject would be most improbable under almost any circumstances; but it is quite incredible under the circumstances in which the apostles were, because, then, no religion (whether Jewish or Pagan) had ever been so much as heard of, which had not priests [sacrificers] and altars. It is plain that, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul had to *meet a difficulty* felt by the Jewish converts, who were so attached to the priests and sacrifices of the Jewish



law, that they were unwilling to give them up. That difficulty Paul meets, not by showing them that the Christian religion *had* priests and sacrifices *on earth*, but by explaining that Christ and his one sacrifice in heaven had come *in the place* of the Jewish priests and sacrifices.

This, the absence of earthly priests and sacrifices, as well as temples and altars,\* is also (you may observe) a proof that Christianity was *not* devised by man. For the thought of a religion without these would never have *naturally* occurred to any one at the time when the gospel was first preached: and an impostor, even if it had occurred to him, would never have been so foolish as to make a religion without these, knowing (as he must have known) that others would be very unwilling to embrace such a religion; nor would he have *succeeded*, as the apostles did, if he had.

And that Christians soon *after the apostles' times*, (though they did not, at first, believe in any thing like *transubstantiation*, or an atoning sacrifice in the eucharist,) began to talk of their clergy as *priests* and *Levites*, shows how strongly men were bent toward such notions; and therefore makes the *silence* of the apostles about any other *priest* but Jesus Christ the more remarkable.

6. Once more, the teaching of Roman Catholics concerning what they call "the sacrament of penance," is unscriptural and dangerous. According to them, the priest has a power to forgive sins *as against God*,—not simply to *declare* God's forgiveness of sins upon condition of man's repentance and faith, but, in the strictest sense, to forgive or retain sins. This doctrine they ground upon our Lord's words spoken to his apostles:—"Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

But our Lord could not have meant that those words should be taken in their strictest literal sense, even as applied to the apostles; because the power of absolutely giving or refusing pardon to men, is a power which no mortal *man* could exercise without an express inspiration, enabling him to *read the heart* of each sinner in each particular case, and to choose rightly according to that knowledge. Without such an inspiration, a mere man would often

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\* When the apostle says:—"We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle," (Heb. xiii. 10,) all the best commentators agree that he means the benefit of *Christ's sacrifice*; "altar" being put, by a figure, for what is laid on an altar. Compare (1 Cor. x. 18) "Are not they which eat the sacrifices *partakers of the altar*?" The apostle does not mean that Christ's body was literally laid on, or brought to an altar, but that it was as real a *sacrifice* as if it were.

So, if one were boasting of the gold-mines of California, and I were to say—"We have a better gold-mine in Manchester"—meaning the cotton-manufacture there—I should be understood to say (not that the cotton-manufacture was carried on in a cavern, or by washing in the bed of a river, but) that the manufacture of cotton yielded *more profit* than the gold-mines.



determine to pardon the *impenitent*, and *not* to pardon the penitent; and it would be impious to think that God would sanction *such* an exercise of power. "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?"

Now, even the apostles themselves had no such continual inspiration as this, enabling them to *judge* and *act* rightly, whenever men came to them professing to be Christians. Otherwise, they would not have permitted those "false brethren" to have been in the church, whom nevertheless we find them complaining of. Nor did Peter (Acts viii. 13) discover Simon Magus, who had been baptized with the rest, to be still "in the gall of bitterness," and "without part or lot" in the Spirit, till his own wicked tongue betrayed him.

In some *special cases*, indeed, the apostles seem to have been enabled to read men's hearts;—as when Peter detected the fraud of Ananias and Sapphira, and when Paul struck Elymas blind. But *then* there was no confession: and the priests now requiring confession, is a proof that they have no such power. Confession of sins, however, even if it were *sincere*, could not make up for the want of insight on the priest's part into men's minds; because the question is not so much *what* sins the penitent has actually committed, as it is, whether he is really turned *from* all sin, and *to* all righteousness. For, true repentance is not only resolving to give up some particular sins and practise some particular duties, but (much more) to renounce all sin, and cultivate every kind of virtue. If a man's *disposition* be thus really changed, God will pardon him *whatever* sins he may have committed; and, if it be *not* thus changed, he cannot be reasonably promised forgiveness, however sorry he may be for the particular crimes he has been guilty of at any one time. Now the priests cannot tell the real inward dispositions of men, (of which they cannot be *sure* themselves,) and, therefore, cannot *give* pardon of sins to professed penitents.

And, as the apostles themselves had not any constant power of reading men's hearts, so we never find them claiming for themselves the power of absolutely remitting men's sins. They never say to any one, as Christ said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." When James directs that, upon a man being afflicted with sickness, the elders of the church should come and anoint him with oil, he does not say that they should *absolve* him authoritatively; but that "they should pray over him," adding, that "the *prayer* of faith should save (heal) the sick, and, if he had committed sins, they should be forgiven him." When he says, "Confess your sins [not to the priest, but] one to another," he does not add, "and absolve one another," but, "and *pray* one for another."

On the other hand, the apostles do constantly speak of having the power of *declaring* to men the conditions of pardon, and of *announcing* to those who were really penitent and believing, the



forgiveness of sins. Paul says that to them “was committed the word of reconciliation.” That they were to men, according as they received or rejected their message: “A savour of life,” or “a savour of death.” And they speak of the *application* of the promises of the gospel by baptism\* to each individual as making over to the persons baptized the forgiveness of sins,—meaning merely forgiveness *on condition* of his real faith and repentance. But of conveying God’s pardon in any other way than by *declaring* it to the penitent, or *sealing* it by the rite of baptism, they never say a word.

It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that they understood our Lord to mean such a power, and such a power only, as they actually claimed and exercised; and if the apostles had no ordinary power of “remitting sins,” but by preaching the word and administering the sacraments, it is plain that no one else can have such a power. Nor is it uncommon in Scripture to speak of men as *doing* that which they *declare* as the messengers of God. So God, says to Jeremiah: “See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and plant.” (Jer. i. 10.) Where the meaning plainly is that Jeremiah was inspired and authorized to *declare* what kingdoms should be established, and what destroyed.

In another view, men have a power of forgiving some sins;—namely, as offences *against themselves*. So our Saviour says: “If thy brother trespass *against thee*, forgive him.” And any society of men can forgive offences against that *society*; and the church can authorize its ministers to forgive offences *against* the church. Every society has a power of making *regulations* and by-laws for its own good government, and any member of it who breaks these offends against the society. They have, in that case, a power of excluding him from the society, and, upon his submission, receiving him back again. Besides, in the church, those who set a bad example by their ill lives, “offend” (cause to stumble in their Christian walk) the “weak brethren,” and bring discredit on the gospel. They should, therefore, be discountenanced as far as possible; and, as long as they persist in their wickedness, Christians should show their disapprobation of them by avoiding their company. Nor should men be encouraged to pretend to be Christians by *coming* to the Lord’s table, who show manifestly in their lives that they have no regard to Christ’s laws. On the other hand, when such persons profess and appear to repent, we should “confirm our love toward them,” and treat them as our brethren

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\* Baptism is very frequently spoken of in Scripture as a remission of sins. Yet, according to the Church of Rome, not only priests, but laymen, and even women, may baptize. It is remarkable, too, that the Church of Rome does not, in any case, require a particular confession of sins previous to baptism.



in Christ. But forgiving sins *as against men*, is not forgiving them *as against God*. If a man owes something to *you*, and also to your *neighbour*, you may forgive him your own debt, but not the other. Christ's *authorizing* Christians, then, thus to forgive or retain sins would be, in fact, making Christians into the society we call a church; and this our Lord may have intended to do when he said, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted: and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

And, in this view—as respects offences against Christian communities—Paul speaks (2 Cor. ii.) of the church as *forgiving* a person who had *offended them* by his scandalous behaviour. The forgiveness there spoken of plainly consisted in the other members receiving him again to communion, and treating him again as a brother. But besides exclusion from the church, the apostle seems to have threatened him with some miraculous punishment, such as the apostles sometimes inflicted, by the supernatural powers given to them, upon offenders. He had declared that *he* himself had, as *if he were present*, judged such an one; and desired the Corinthians, in execution of that judgment, when they were gathered together, "*with his spirit*," with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan, for the "*destruction of the flesh*." (1 Cor. v. 3, 4.) Now, on hearing of his repentance, the apostle remits that punishment, and says: "To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive it also."

Since the apostles, therefore, speak of their having no power of remitting or retaining sins, but only, (1.) when they were enabled to read men's hearts, and punish criminals miraculously, or (2.) when they acted as officers of the church toward offenders *against the church*, or (3.) when they dispensed the word and the sacraments, we may safely conclude that no other power besides these was committed to them by Christ, when he spoke the words we have been considering. And it is incredible that, if the apostles believed that men's sins could not be forgiven, after baptism, unless they confessed them to a priest, and received absolution from him, they should never, in the New Testament, have pressed this duty upon their converts, or given directions either to the clergy or the people concerning it. They did not "hold back any thing that was profitable," much less what was necessary, to their hearers, but kept themselves "pure from the blood of all," by not shunning to "declare unto them all the counsel of God." Yet, while they often make large promises of forgiveness to men on repentance, they never drop a hint of *this condition* of it.

Even supposing that a power of retaining and remitting the sins of individuals were given to the apostles, and to the priests as their successors, still this would not prove a private confession of each man's sins to the priest to be necessary. Because, as I said before,



the question is not, *what* sins the penitent has committed, but whether his repentance be *sincere*. Now, if the priest explain to the penitent the conditions of the gospel-covenant, and the true nature of repentance, and if the penitent professes, and seems to show such a repentance, then the priest has all the information he *can* have, necessary for giving absolution. For the priest's knowing the peculiar circumstances of a man's sins is of no avail, unless the man really repents of them; and this last (and only important) point he *can* only know in any case by the man's *profession* of repentance.

Here you may remark, by the way, how groundless is the pretence that the practice of confession gives a rational assurance of pardon to Roman Catholics which Protestants cannot have. For (1.) the priest's absolution can be of no value, unless the person himself be sincerely penitent; and of the sincerity of his repentance he can have no better evidence than a Protestant has, or may have. For, if a Protestant doubt the state of his own mind, and thinks another unprejudiced person can form a better judgment of it, he may open his mind to a clergyman, or to some experienced adviser, and take their opinions on the subject. (2.) With respect to that very large number of sins, which, from dullness of conscience, we do not mark or remember, and therefore cannot *confess* particularly, the Roman Catholic can have no security with respect to these, but a *general* repentance in the sight of God, and praying to be "cleansed from his secret faults:" and this the Protestant has also. But, if it be said that the priest's absolution covers these, *that* is allowing that the priest might forgive *without* confession. (3.) A Roman Catholic cannot be sure that he has "examined" himself with perfect diligence, so as to bring to mind all the sins he is *able* to remember. Now, if he have left out any sin through culpable negligence, that sin, being not confessed when it might have been confessed, is not forgiven by the priest. (4.) Roman Catholics are only bound to confess *mortal* sins, not *venial*. Now, this is an acknowledgment that some sins may be pardoned without confession, or absolution by a priest; and, therefore, that our Lord's giving priests power to forgive sins generally, does not cut men off from obtaining forgiveness without absolution. But then, unfortunately, the church has nowhere determined *what* sins are mortal, and what venial, or the true distinction between the two kinds: and great differences among confessors (priests hearing confessions) are known to exist about this matter; some being more, and some less strict; some refusing to listen to the confession of sins, *as venial*, which others regard as *mortal*. Nor have the priests themselves any infallible rule to guide them in judging about such things. The *security* here, therefore, is only the *discretion* of fallible men, who notoriously differ among themselves. If the



priest mistake, or fail in his duty, there is no ground of reliance, except (what Protestants rely on) God's mercy. (5.) Confessors also differ as to what *sort* of repentance is sufficient for absolution; and the church has nowhere exactly explained what it means by that *attrition*, which is said to be the least amount of sorrow available. (6.) The Church of Rome requires, in order that an absolution should take effect, that the priest should really *intend*\* in his own mind to absolve the penitent. Now, the penitent cannot certainly know what is passing in the priest's mind, who may be, for aught he can tell, an atheist, Jew, or Mohammedan. Is not this wonderful *security* for the conscience of a reasonable man?

But though the practice of confession gives no real security to Roman Catholics which Protestants may not have, it no doubt gives a false and fanciful security to those who can bring themselves to trust to the priest entirely, and *put him in the place of God*. Most men find it much more easy to trust the priest than to trust God, because we are naturally indisposed toward *faith in things unseen*; that is, feeling and acting in respect of them as *realities*. We cannot *see* God, but we can *see* the priest lift up his hand to give absolution; we can *hear* the priest pronounce his absolution; and we can know exactly *what amount* of penance *he* requires from us; whereas, with respect to God, we can only know that he bids us, if we would please him, strive to avoid *all sin*, and practise *all righteousness*. And men forget that all this is merely a certainty of what the priest *says and does*,—not at all of what he *intends*; still less, of how *rightly* he says or does it, or how far God *ratifies* his acts and words.

The Scriptures frequently warn us against thus presuming to put the judgment of man in the place of God's judgment. "With me," says the Apostle Paul, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know [am conscious of] nothing by [against] myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing before the time, *until the Lord come*, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have [his] praise of God," (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 5.)

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\* Such an *intention* (at least of doing what the church directs) is demanded by the Church of Rome from the performer of any sacrament to make it valid. It would seem, therefore, that, since with them marriage is a sacrament of which the *parties* (not the priest) are the performers, either party, by secretly withholding consent, may make the marriage invalid. This—a secret reservation of consent—was the chief ground on which Henry VIII. broke his marriage with Anne of Cleves. Some Roman Catholics try to explain away this doctrine of *intention*; but it is held in its greatest strictness by their best divines; the Council of Trent certainly *seems* to affirm it: and no *authority* in that church has ever ventured to condemn it. If any one is *sure* that it is not true, it must be *by private judgment*.



In effect, from putting the priest in the place of God, men come to fancy that what satisfies the priest satisfies God also; and that they may be sure of God's forgiveness when the priest has pronounced their absolution: and, therefore, they think no more of their past sins after confession, feeling as if the score were quite wiped out, and freely indulge themselves in whatever the priest tells them is not wrong. Whereas, the priest, however diligent and honest, may mistake their state of mind; and the priest they confess to may mistake the real nature of sins, which the church has nowhere explained fully; and he may be quite dishonest and careless, or not quite honest and careful. Whereas, those who feel that they have to do with an all-seeing and all-righteous Judge, will not be so likely to fall into these dangerous mistakes.

Another thing which recommends the practice of confession to many persons, is, feeling as if they had somehow *atoned* for their sins by *confessing them*; and they speak of confession as "making a clean breast;" which is just as if a man, whose hands were very dirty, should fancy he made them *clean* by *pulling off his gloves*. Yet men do feel as if the burden on their own minds was lightened by showing their foul and sinful thoughts to a priest. Now, the burden of *grief* may indeed be lightened by the sympathy of others; but the burden of *guilt* can be taken off our consciences only by God's forgiveness, on our resolution to amend our lives. Men forget that, for bearing both burdens, they have a great High Priest in heaven, Jesus, the Son of God, who "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows;" upon whom "the chastisement of our peace was laid, and by whose stripes we are healed;" who "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," having been himself "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

Acknowledging our faults in the sight of God is, indeed, the *first step* toward amendment; and acknowledging the wrong we have done to men is, in respect of them, necessary to give them hopes that our minds are changed, and that we are not disposed to persist in our wrong-doing. But, in both cases, confession is only valuable as a *step toward* amendment; nor are any sinners more hopelessly incorrigible than those "who *own* their faults, but never *mend*."

From what has been said, you will readily perceive that the Roman Catholic practice is not (as you might at first suppose) a mere *contrivance* of the priests to get themselves power, by finding out men's secrets, but a thing *craved* for by the people, as an ease to their consciences. No doubt it does give the priests a great and most dangerous power—the shocking and notorious abuse of which is acknowledged by many Roman Catholics, and even by some popes in their bulls—but that power could never have been gained if there had not been something in the practice *attractive* to peo-



ple's minds. Men would never have submitted to have their most secret thoughts, and those of their wives and daughters, wrung out of them by a priest, if they did not feel that they gained a great deal more than they lost by such a humiliation. Men's natural impatience to get rid of guilt without reformation, and men's proneness to put man's judgment in the place of God's, and substitute the seen for the unseen, these are the true roots of the practice; and the passages quoted from Scripture in its behalf are *excuses*, not *reasons* for it.

The Scripture says only in general, "Confess your faults one to another;" and leaves us, as in the case of other general precepts, to determine the occasions to which the rule applies. It implies, however, that there *are* such occasions. Now, I think, confession is plainly proper—(1.) to your neighbour, of *wrong* done to him. For that is clearly needful to satisfy him of the reality of our repentance; and nothing but pride can make us unwilling to own ourselves in the wrong when we are so: (2.) to your child or friend, for their *instruction*; when you would warn them, by your example, against such temptations as you have experienced; or, (3.) for *advice*; to a wise counsellor, to consult him whether you have done wrong, and what course to pursue; or to let him know your peculiar weakness, in order that he may advise you how to guard against danger from it.

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## No. IV.

SINCE we sent you Caution II., some tracts which have been lately published and circulated by the Roman Catholic clergy in England have come into our\* hands; and it may be worth while to give you a sample of the sort of arguments which they are bringing forward in order to persuade men to join their church. You might chance to meet some Roman Catholics who would tell you that, in that second Caution, we had purposely chosen the weakest things said by them, and *kept back* what they thought the weightiest considerations in their favour. But when we bring before you the arguments which the very clever and shrewd persons who are now trying to convert England, actually allege and thrust on people's notice, as the most likely to succeed, no one can pretend that I am seeking to deceive you, or hide the real strength of their

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\* That is, of us who are jointly (as was said in No. 1) engaged in these Cautions.



cause from your view. They have undeniably some learned, and many able men among them; and such persons are not likely to make the worst of their own case.

One of these tracts proposes to show—1, how England became Christian; and, 2, how it became Protestant. And this it does by describing what sort of persons Pope Gregory, and the Monk Augustine, and King Ethelbert, who established the Roman Catholic Church in England, were; and what sort of persons King Henry VIII. and Archbishop Cranmer were; and then it puts the question—Which party do you choose to follow?—Whose Christianity do you like best?

Now, what do you suppose the author of that tract would think of a Protestant writer who should give a most favourable account (as he might quite truly) of the Moravians, who converted the Esquimaux in Greenland, or the Independents, who converted the South Sea Islanders, and *thence* argue that the belief of Protestants is correct, and that moreover all men are bound to become Moravians? Or, again, if a Protestant were to argue, that since (on his own showing) Henry VIII. was a greedy tyrant, and since he also opposed Luther, and burned those who denied transubstantiation, *therefore*, Luther was right, and transubstantiation an error!

Or, again, many of the popes (though not *above* thirty of them, perhaps, as a Roman Catholic gentleman observed the other day in the House of Commons) were worse men than even Henry VIII.; *therefore*, the doctrines which they opposed were true!

When Paul was at Rome (Philpp. i.), “Some preached Christ of envy and strife;” wherein *he* rejoiced. But some, perhaps, inferred the falsity of Christianity.

This writer tells you at large how many were led to support the Reformation for the sake of *plunder*, and to get the goods of the monasteries, and the bishop’s sees. He forgets to say that Cardinal Wolsey, a good Roman Catholic, began the work; by the Pope’s permission, in dissolving *forty* monasteries; and that all the world were then crying out at the scandalous way in which the popes and cardinals were, and had long been, plundering the church; often to enrich their nephews, or mistresses, or bastard children!

But let Protestant plunderers be as bad as you please. How does this prove that the doctrines they opposed were true? Oh, of course, we know nothing *false* can be opposed by men acting on bad motives! Hence, the Mohammedan religion must be true, since it is notorious that many of the crusaders were animated by a desire of plunder!

Now we are talking of the abbeyes, let me observe that, though this author talks of their *charity* (*i. e.* alms distributed to beggars at the convent gate) in such a style as to lead men to fancy that



Protestants had no charity at all; yet I will venture to say that Protestant England has given *voluntarily* much more to charitable and religious purposes than Roman Catholic England ever did. Get any good account of London alone, and see the number of hospitals, almshouses, schools, and religious societies, which Protestants have endowed or maintain; and consider that the money given to them was not wrung from people, by remorse of conscience, to make satisfaction for enormous sins, or to purchase eternal life; nor, for a great part of it, left on death-beds when the owners could no longer enjoy it, and when they were beset by priests urging them to leave their property to the church: but that *all* was freely given, and much given by the owners in their lifetime; and you will be able to judge of this matter. We do not (God knows) give as much as we ought; but it is mere slander to say we give nothing. Yet, the other day, a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* thought it fair to give the whole credit of the exertions made to relieve the Irish people, during the late famine there, to the Roman Catholic clergy; though it is notorious that the Protestant clergy exerted themselves to the utmost, and that many of them went without sufficient food themselves to supply the starving multitudes around them—that some lost their lives, and some their health, and some even their reason, from the great efforts they made in behalf of a people the majority of whom are Roman Catholics. Yet that writer speaks as if he really did not know that there are any Protestant clergy in Ireland.

Indeed, so entirely does he take for granted that no clergy but the Roman Catholic bestir themselves in Ireland to promote industry and good agriculture, that he gives high praise, on that account, to a Rev. Mr. Moriarty, supposing him to be a *Roman Catholic priest*; though the fact is, that the gentleman, thus unconsciously, but most deservedly praised, is a *Protestant* clergyman at *Dingle*, the pastor of a large and increasing body of converts from Romanism, and himself, too, a convert of very many years' standing. It is of *him* that the reviewer speaks as follows:—

“*The Roman Catholic Clergy.*—We have mentioned the Roman Catholic clergy. It is extremely gratifying to learn how actively and cordially they have supported the cause of agricultural improvement. The names of near a hundred Roman Catholic priests and curates occur in the reports of the ‘Practical Instructors,’ as having cheerfully and strenuously co-operated with them. Not a few are noticed specially as being forward themselves in the same sphere of usefulness. We read of a Rev. Mr. M’Garry, in the county of Donegal, who had thorough-drained and subsoiled a large portion of his farm, to the perfect satisfaction of the ‘Instructor.’ We are told of a Rev. Mr. O’Connell, of Kenmare, that he is ‘a good farmer, and loses no opportunity of impressing upon his flock the



obvious advantage of an alteration in their present mode of husbandry.' At Dingle, the 'Practical Instructor' accompanied the *Rev. Mr. Moriarty* over a large farm which he had lately got possession of in the worst order; 'but now, from the superior manner in which he has reclaimed it, it will prove not only profitable, but something more. It is his intention to make this a model farm, for an example in the locality.' Of the *Rev. Michael Conway*, parish priest of Bangor, in the county of Mayo, we are informed that 'his farm is conducted with judgment and skill, and, in speaking to the people, he can address them practically.' Here we see the ministers of religion in what the circumstances of the country have made their proper place, cheering the march of improvement, leading civilization by the hand. We could multiply the number of such instances."

But to return to these Roman Catholic tracts. This writer goes on to tell us that the Duke of Northumberland, who had all along professed himself a Protestant, confessed, when he came to be executed, that he had been all along a Roman Catholic in his heart: and then he adds—"You will never find a single instance of a [Roman] Catholic thus confessing his dishonesty, and denying his faith, when about to suffer the most horrible of deaths."

Now, what *does* this mean?—Northumberland, by this man's own account, *was* all along a Roman Catholic. Yet here we have him *confessing his dishonesty* at the point of death. But, if he means that no one ever *professed* to be a Roman Catholic, without really being so in his heart, that is what no one but a very ignorant person could believe, or a very foolish one could assert. It is very well known that, in Spain, Jews and Mohammedans have lived as Roman Catholics, and even become Roman Catholic priests, retaining all the while their Jewish or Mohammedan faith; and the number of pretended converts, who have been afterward burned by the Inquisition, for *relapsing* into Judaism, is not small. *Multitudes* of priests, at the time of the first French Revolution, came forward to profess their infidelity, as soon as they had no interest in denying it: and it is pretty well known that many others, including some popes, have confessed this in private.

But, were it otherwise, what do you say of the Hindoos, who drown themselves in the Ganges, or lie down to be crushed under the car of Juggernaut? Have any of these ever confessed their dishonesty, or denied their faith? And did not Cranmer, when he came to undergo a horrible death, renounce his hypocritical submission to the Pope and *die a Protestant*?

However, it would be for my interest (if I had no regard to truth) to admit what this writer says. For surely it would be creditable to Protestants, if *none* of them were ever known to pretend, from temporal hopes or fears, to be Roman Catholics all their lives, and



only own the truth when they came to die; and very discreditable to Roman Catholics, if they were *the only people* in the world ever guilty of such hypocrisy. I suspect the Roman Catholics, when they find what their champions are saying for them, will be apt to cry with Falstaff, "Call you that backing your friends? A plague on such backing, say I."

Well, next we have a tract to tell us how Queen Mary restored the Roman Catholic religion. I have not yet seen the second part of that tract, which is to explain all about "Smithfield fires," and remove our vulgar Protestant prejudices against them. But we have a pretty good foretaste of what is to come in the present part. For here it is pretty plainly said, that, in a Roman Catholic country, and where the people desire it, it is the duty of a prince to prevent the introduction of false doctrines by penalties—short of death. I hope Cardinal Wiseman will remember this; for, if this be true, he cannot very decently blame a Protestant prince and people, if they should (as I trust they never will) prevent, by penalties, his introducing what the people consider false doctrine into England.

Then we are told that, up to the Reformation, there was but one faith and one church; for that, though strange doctrines were preached, they did not gain ground, being *put down* by the government and the people at large. This is giving a very creditable account truly of the unity of his church! So a Mohammedan might say, We true believers have a glorious unity; for, if any blasphemer open his mouth against the prophet, the zealous populace will hardly wait for the Cadi; but *impale* him on the spot.

Another tract is upon the ancient Britons; and the argument of it amounts to this:—The ancient Britons, who were *extirpated* by *our* ancestors, the (pagan) Saxons, received a religion which, *some say*, was that of the present Church of Rome; therefore, as we inhabit the *same island*, we ought to adopt their religion!—or else that of the Druids, for theirs was still more ancient.

Then there is another tract to show that the Church of Rome preserved the Holy Scriptures very carefully, and *therefore* cannot teach any thing contrary to them. For which argument, no doubt, the Chief Rabbi of the Jews in London will be much obliged to the author. Just so he will argue:—You Christians received the Old Testament from us. We preserved it with scrupulous care, counting even the letters, and writing it on most beautiful parchment. It is incredible, therefore, that we should teach any thing contrary to it, since, if we did, we should have destroyed the book which would refute us!

The Jews *bear witness against themselves*, by preserving, at once, the Scriptures, whose divine authority they acknowledge, and also traditions contrary thereto, as in the case of the fifth command-



ment, which our Lord says they made void through their traditions. So does Rome hand down to us books which make no mention of adoration to the Virgin, of the supremacy of Rome, of sacrificing priests, &c., in places where we should have been sure to find them, if known in the apostolic times.

Toward the end of that tract, the author tries (but cautiously) to prove that Roman Catholics never were remiss in translating the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue. The Catholic church, he says, translated the Bible in many vulgar languages, and *most of those* translations were made before the glorious Reformation. "Now, mark how a plain tale shall put him down." *Most of the translations*, not made by Protestants, were made in *early times*, before the error of thinking that the laity might be left in ignorance of the Scriptures began to prevail. Many of them were, indeed, made by persons *not* dependent on the Church of Rome at all, as the Syriac; some, by persons whom he would himself call heretics, as the Gothic. But true it is that the Church of Rome did, in early times, translate the Scriptures into Latin, because that was then the vulgar [common] language; and hence that version is still called the "Vulgate." Yet that church so completely *changed* afterward from its former principles, that it is notorious that *one of the chief contests* at the time of the Reformation was, whether it was *needful* that the Scriptures should be translated into living languages—a contest which could not have arisen if the Scriptures *had been* translated by the Church of Rome itself into languages then living, and commonly understood. For many years after the old translations had ceased to be intelligible, the Church of Rome neither made new ones, nor suffered those made by others (as Wicliffe, the Waldenses, &c.) to be read by the people; but, *after the Reformation*, finding that the people *would have* the Scriptures, it was driven to make some versions of them, lest they should read those made by Protestants.\*

Indeed, the translators of the English Roman Catholic version of the New Testament say expressly, in their preface, that their attempt might seem *hardly tolerable*, if it were not that the Protestant version made it necessary to put something in its place. All England (not to speak of other places) was left, for centuries *before the Reformation*, without any authorized translations of the Bible into a language understood by, and accessible to, the people. Indeed, when he tells us that some of the translations he speaks

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\* I do not deny that, in the Middle Ages, some vernacular versions of Scripture were made by private individuals for private use; but they were not sanctioned, circulated commonly, nor freely read. If the Church of Rome *then* had really desired that the common people should understand the Scriptures, she would have had them *read to them* in a language which they understood; as the *ancient Church* of Rome did.



of were made in the “very *earliest* times,” that is enough to show us they could have been of little use in *modern times*. The English in Richard the Third’s time must have been greatly edified by Bede’s Anglo-Saxon Gospel!

We have next a Tract to tell us (*on the word of the Jesuits*) how much good the Jesuits did among the Indians in Paraguay, and what pious and enlightened Christians they made those Indians; but he omits to mention that, as soon as those Indian converts, who had been kept in leading-strings, and not taught to *study Scripture*, and exercise their own judgments, were *left to themselves*, they at once *fell back* into barbarism and paganism.

The argument of the tract is nearly this:—The Jesuits were very zealous, self-denying missionaries, and treated the Indians very kindly; *therefore*, their religion is true. So a Quaker might draw a fine picture (finer than this in some things, though with more of *drab* in the colours) of the behaviour of his sect to the Indians in Pennsylvania, and thence argue that *Quakerism* is the only pure form of Christianity.

But you will ask me, perhaps—How came the Indians in Paraguay to be *left to themselves*? I will tell you. All the Roman Catholic princes in Europe became alarmed at the intrigues of the Jesuits, and it was commonly thought that they had formed the design of getting still greater temporal power into their own hands than the Popes ever had, even in the days when they deposed emperors. Hence, when the [Roman Catholic] kings of Spain and Portugal saw them making themselves absolute princes (as they were) of Paraguay, raising armies there, and suffering no strangers to enter it, they thought it best to turn them out of it, which they were forced to use military measures to effect.

All this the writer omits to tell; and when he speaks so pathetically of the rapine and slaughter committed by the Spaniards in conquering South America, he forgets to say that they were sent there by the Pope, who graciously *gave away* Peru to them, as if he were the Lord of the earth.

This author speaks also very pathetically of the persecutions of Roman Catholic missionaries and converts in China; though, as we have just seen, he holds it to be the duty of a prince, where his subjects are all of one faith, to prevent the introduction of *false* doctrines among them; which the Emperor of China, no doubt, thinks the Romish doctrines to be.

In reality, the persecutions of the Roman Catholic missionaries in China and Japan seem to have been chiefly caused by well-grounded suspicions of *ambitious* designs. And, if those people knew that the men who came to make converts among them thought that, as soon as they were strong enough, they ought to *put down*



all paganism, you cannot wonder that they should have wished to be beforehand with the missionaries.

If a Christian missionary, who holds such principles as are here maintained, honestly avows them to a Mohammedan or Pagan prince—saying, “It is your duty to suppress, by the sword, all religions except the true one, and mine is the true;” the former of these statements is so much more acceptable to human nature than the other, and so much more likely to be the *first* admitted, that the reply could hardly fail to be, “I agree with you, except that I hold *mine* to be the true religion;” and the probable result would be immediate sentence of death, or banishment, to the missionary and all his followers.

Or suppose the missionary studiously to *conceal*, at first, this point of duty from the magistrate, and that a Pagan prince discovered that the Church of Rome enjoined on all persons in any authority in the church (as it is enjoined in the creed of Pope Pius IV.) to “take care, by all means in their power, that all their subjects, and all who came within their cure in the exercise of their office, should hold and profess” the Roman Catholic faith; and that, accordingly, the Pope and his bishops had constantly, where they had the power, driven away, *by force*, all teachers of contrary doctrines, and had often encouraged and exhorted Christian princes to scourge, imprison, banish, or burn those whom they called heretics or misbelievers;—would he not naturally think these men all the more dangerous from *concealing* such things from him, and regard them as no better than an assassin, who hides the murderous knife in his sleeve, till the moment when he can plunge it into the heart of his unwary companion?

It may perhaps be replied, that the first Christian preachers (and, in some degree, this holds good with their successors) did knowingly bring persecution on themselves, by preaching a gospel unacceptable both to Jews and Gentiles. But they did this because they had received a *distinct revelation of certain truths*, together with an express command to declare those truths “to every creature,” and to “make disciples of all nations.” And if we find an express injunction in the New Testament (but not otherwise) to inculcate and practise, as a duty, the employment of secular force in the cause of our religion, we must, I admit, comply with that injunction, *openly and unreservedly*, and abide the consequences. But there is no such injunction there, but rather the contrary in almost every page. If, therefore, Christian professors resolve thus to “tempt the Lord,” by “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” and claiming the divine sanction for conduct which the Scriptures not only do not enjoin, but forbid, they are not God’s martyrs, should the result be that “they who *draw* the sword perish by the sword.”



This last passage (John xviii. 11) cannot, of course, mean literally that *all* will perish by the sword who employ violence. Does it not mean, "If you confine yourselves to argument and persuasion, and good example, *I* will protect the cause, and, sooner or later, advance it in opposition to secular power,"—(as was done in the early spread of Christianity,)—"but if you resort to force, you must *take the chances of war*: the stronger, in military force, will succeed against the weaker: you will be *liable* to perish by the sword, if more and more powerful swords are drawn against you. You will throw away the weapon which gives *you* the advantage, and take that which gives truth none."

And even thus has it often fared with Roman Catholic and other Christian missionaries, who have called in the aid of the "arm of flesh."

I find, on looking back, that I have omitted one thing worth remarking on.

One of these tracts contains a parable about a set of travellers, some of whom thought their *guides* were leading them wrong, and resolved to consult the *map* for themselves, and be directed by that. But though all took the same map for direction, they could not agree as to its meaning, but separated, each thinking himself right, on different routes. Whereupon the rest congratulated one another on having stuck to their guides.

In this parable, of course, the *guides* are the Romish priests; the *map* is the Bible; and the men who trust to it are the Protestants.

But, in applying this parable, every thing depends on the *reasons* the travellers might have had for distrusting their guides. If these were good reasons, the rest might have had small cause to congratulate themselves. All they could say was, that they kept together, and if they fell into mischief, would *all* fall into it. But if keeping together was all their aim, they might attain *that* quite as well by following any one of the others, as by sticking to their guides. Suppose that *all* the others went *wrong*, that would not prove the guides right.

Nor did the mistakes of those who preferred the map to the guides prove that the map was not a sufficient direction. If they were—as this writer tells us—silly and obstinate men, the fault might be in themselves; and the map might be a very good map notwithstanding, and sufficient to guide those who were *not* silly and obstinate, and much more fit to be relied on than the guides. Their differences only proved that most of them did not understand it; but *why* they did not, is another question, which, if we saw the map, we might be able to answer.

But now, what do you think of *my* parable?

A party of travellers to a great city had a map of the way, but distrusting it, resolved to take a guide. The road was confessedly



difficult and intricate. Several guides offered themselves, who modestly said that they had taken great pains to understand the matter thoroughly, and would do their best to bring them thither safely; offering to show them by the map, as they went along, how the road lay. But these were all thrust aside by one swaggering fellow, who declared that he was an *infallible guide*, and could not possibly mistake the path by day or night. The travellers took him at his word, and "congratulated each other" on getting a man whom they could trust entirely. But after a while some of them thought that the road along which he led them had a very suspicious appearance; and on looking at the map, they found that they were on ground which was there laid down as *dangerous*. Thereupon they ventured to remonstrate, but the guide immediately knocked them down; and, turning to the rest, assured them that the things marked on the map as mountains were rivers, and the rocks marshes, and the marshes firm ground, &c.; in short, that they could not understand the map. And, so saying, he put the map in his pocket, and bade them trust to him to guide them according to its *true meaning*. They did so, and "both fell into the ditch."

True it is that differences among Protestants are the great boast and great strength of the Church of Rome. And just so, contests between Whigs and Tories are matter of scornful exultation, no doubt, to the Russian autocrat. *He* has no members of Parliament making speeches against each other; all being under *one* despotic monarchy. And true it is that in *all* questions, religious or political, where there is a right and a wrong, several different parties cannot be *all* right. When all are forced into agreement or outward submission, what they submit to *may* conceivably be right.

But suppose it is not? Then *all* are in the wrong; and truth and right have no chance at all, to the end of time.

When Bonaparte was, with his attendants, overtaken in Egypt by the tide of the Red Sea, out of sight of the shore, the whole party were in danger of being drowned; and, if he had given orders to proceed in some *one* direction, *if* that had chanced not to be the right, *all* must have perished. He told them each to ride in the direction he judged best; and if the water was found to deepen, to turn back; if to grow shallower, to shout to his comrades. Thus the one who hit on the right course saved both himself and the rest. But if some of the rest had been (as in religion, politics, and other matters) too perverse to follow the *proved* right course, at least *some* would have been saved.

Still there can be no doubt that our divisions are a great stumbling-block in the way of Roman Catholics; and it is much to be lamented that some Protestants seem inclined to help forward the Pope's cause, by taking occasion from present circumstances to fall on each other, even when (like the Jews in the last siege of their



city) they are assailed by a common enemy. I have seen, for example, lately a tract by an Arian minister (Dr. H. Montgomery, of Belfast) in which he takes advantage of the present excitement against papal aggressions to make an attack upon the established Church of England and Ireland. Now, no one can blame an Arian for preaching against the doctrines and system of our church, if he will; but is *this* the time, or *such* the proper *way* of assailing it? It is curious, too, to observe how much he treads (as it were) in the very steps of the Roman Catholic tract-writer, enlarging on just the same vulgar commonplaces about Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth. He tells us that the Thirty-nine Articles are an admixture of *Romanism* and German Protestantism; *meaning*, I suppose, by "Romanism," the doctrines of the trinity, atonement, &c. Then he says that the "two principal creeds of our church" "are entirely Romish," and our Liturgy chiefly so! Now, the two principal creeds of our church are the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. A man who thinks these "entirely Romish" may well think the Liturgy chiefly so. He adds, as a matter of praise, that some "trifling modifications" were made in our Liturgy, under Charles I., by Archbishop Laud; the *fact* being that, though Laud introduced or sanctioned some idle *ceremonies*, no modification in the Liturgy whatever was made in the reign of Charles I. Then he says that, since that time, no change at all has been made; the *fact* being, that several changes were made under Charles II. Finally, he declares himself *rejoiced* to find that many of our clergy, and the great body of our laity, differ greatly from that Prayer-book, to which *all the clergy subscribe, and which all the laity use*. And is this fit matter of rejoicing to a Christian man?

And now, before I conclude, let me return for a few moments to the subject which I brought before you in my first Caution.

The writer of the Roman Catholic tracts which I have noticed was permitted by our free and equal laws to do his best; and he has done it. What that best *is*, you have seen. He has tried to persuade people (contrary to fact and reason) that their ancestors were Roman Catholics, and that, *therefore*, they ought to be the same; that all Roman Catholic rulers have been very good, and all Protestant rulers bad; and that Roman Catholics have always been zealous in reclaiming the heathen and feeding beggars, &c.; and that, therefore, we ought all to become Roman Catholics forthwith. These, and such as these, are his arguments; and we have met him by well-known facts, and plain reasons, without bitter railing or passionate declamations, and without going into any matters not level to ordinary understandings, and have shown good grounds for all reasonable men to reject all that he has attempted to establish.

But what if it had been *penal* to say any thing against the established Protestant opinions?



In that case, he could easily have *insinuated* all that he has now openly alleged; and, even if he had been liable to prosecution for any part of it, the tracts would have been all the more carefully circulated—just as is the case now in Italy, with a tract against confession, by a (late) Roman Catholic priest, which no one dares openly to sell or buy, but which *is read all over the country*.

But, in that case, he might have *hinted* how much *more* he *could* have said, had he been allowed to speak out, &c.; though, in fact, he might, in a covert way, have said all he has to say. • *And so also with infidels*. Unless you can keep the people in *total* darkness, it is the wisest way for the advocates of truth to give them *full* light.

Hence you may see that any sort of *legislative* protection against “papal aggressions,” planned for encouraging Protestantism, and placing Roman Catholics under difficulties, tends (as was said in No. I.) to disparage the Protestant cause, both by implying that, if both sides are allowed fair play, the Roman Catholics must prevail, and also by raising a suspicion that more *might* be said in their favour if they were allowed freedom of speech. I have refuted all that this writer *has* said; but it would be impossible to refute suspicions of what he *could* have said, supposing he had not been left free.

I am quite sure, indeed, that many good men who attended public meetings to petition for legislative protection against the Pope, without specifying *what* protection would please them, would be sorry to see penal laws brought in; but they ought to have considered what such a movement as they joined in must end in. It must end, I think, *either* in what is vulgarly called “a bottle of smoke,” *or* in some strong penal enactment.

Let them calmly reflect that there *are* but two ways of opposing the spread of an influence derived from *opinions*. (1.) One is the way of force; and that is only effectual when followed *thoroughly*, by banishing or putting to death all who oppose the established religion, as was done with the Moors and Jews of Spain. Less than this will only irritate and provoke, and call up fresh zeal and activity in the party whom you seek to crush, making them, at the same time, objects of pity, and even affection, to generous-hearted persons among yourselves. (2.) The other is, to oppose both religious error and infidelity, by learning and teaching the truth; by sound *reasons*, which are the *only* weapons peculiar to truth, and the only ones which give truth an *advantage*.

Of this, at any rate, be sure, that nothing the Pope himself could do, could do us so much damage as the selfish, short-sighted, unjust, and base procedure of legislating for what is (wrongly) called the Church of England, omitting Ireland. The Act of Union between the two kingdoms made the two churches to become one—the United Church of England and Ireland; and legislating for



part of that church, on different principles from the rest, is to set at naught your own laws, and teach *all others*, by your example, to despise them. Let your legislation be at least consistent with itself. Inconsistency in these things is not a mere *logical flaw*, but a practical one; and there is no more certain source of weakness in a State than a manifest inconsistency between the principles of the constitution and the way in which the government is worked. You have gone on too long already making laws for that country which you could not, or would not, enforce; professing principles which you could not, or would not, apply; and then wondering that the Irish people will not respect the law which yourselves have taught them to laugh at and disobey. Ireland may at present be an anomaly; but, if things do not mend, it will cease to be so in a way most disastrous to you. Its example will eat like a canker. It is time that you should make your option—either repeal the Act of Union, or deal with Ireland on the principles of the Act of Union.

Besides, there can be no reason, but *fear*, for taking different measures in Ireland from those you take in England against the Pope; and, therefore, such measures will at once *provoke* and *encourage* Roman Catholics, by showing that you are ready to trample on them where they are weak, and concede to them where they are strong. The *Irish* Roman Catholics will owe you no thanks. They will feel that you would scourge *them* too, if you dared; and they will become, consequently, all the more arrogant and encroaching. The *English* Roman Catholics will be stung with a sense of injustice, and feel that they can only gain (what they will think) their rights, by gaining more political power; and you will thus draw the cords tighter which bind them to their brethren on the other side of the Channel; so that, instead of strengthening English influence, you will really strengthen Irish influence. You will make Ireland—where it may be done in safety—the *centre* of all Roman Catholic movements in the queen's dominions, and the Irish priests the directors of such movements.

And, while you are bringing yourselves into all these difficulties, for the sake of stringent measures in England, you will really be doing *nothing at all* to prevent the real danger. For no political measures (short of the direst persecution) can prevent the spreading of Romish doctrine; and, if that leaven once leavens a large mass in England, your stringent measures will not be worth the parchment they are written on. They will be as utterly powerless in England, and for the same reason, as they have been before now in Ireland. The *great* danger, then, is of Romish doctrine; and what makes that so dangerous is, that it is the natural fruit of our own corrupt hearts: as we hope soon to show you in the next Caution.



## No. V.—PART 1.

MY DEAR FRIENDS:—

Some of you may, perhaps, be disposed to say of what I have lately been addressing to you—"This may be useful for others; but *I* am not likely to come in the way of Roman Catholic priests, and therefore I need not trouble myself about the errors of the Church of Rome."

Now, this would be reasonable enough, if those errors were *introduced* and *caused* by that church; but, in truth, they have a much deeper origin. They spring of themselves out of the soil of *human nature*; and all who partake of human nature, carry in their own bosoms the seeds which may *grow* into the errors of the Church of Rome, or something essentially the same.

It is a great mistake to suppose (as some persons seem to suppose) that all the errors of the Church of Rome are doctrines invented by their priests and learned men, and by them imposed upon the people. On the contrary, many of those errors first arose among the people, and spread very wide among *them*, before the learned men took them up, and endeavoured to give them as rational and consistent a shape as they could. And, in some cases, the clergy appear to have, even reluctantly at first, put themselves at the head of popular movements, under the fear of losing their influence entirely, if they strove to check them. Hence (as has been truly said) it is a sad thing in the Church of Rome that, while the laity think they cannot but be very safe in following the unanimous opinion of such numbers of very learned men, those learned men are not, in truth, at liberty to have any *opinion* at all, but are obliged to employ all their learning merely in defending what the most *ignorant* men in former ages have determined for them beforehand.

Nor is it into the Church of Rome *only* that such errors have made their way; but many of the same wrong doctrines and practices as we commonly call *Romish* are found prevailing also in the Greek Church, which was always independent of Rome, and generally hostile to it.

Here, then, is a plain proof that men may be in danger of falling into what are called Romish errors, without listening to Romish priests, or having any disposition to submit to the Pope. The Greek Christians are as little apt as we can be to listen to Romish priests; and they resist, and always have resisted, all attempts of the Pope to establish his authority over them. They are just as resolute against *papal aggressions* as we are, and have constantly



opposed them with great vigour and perseverance; so that, even the other day, when the present Pope wrote to them, claiming their allegiance, the Greek bishops answered that *he* was in schism, and should return to the communion of the one Holy Catholic Church, (meaning their own,) before they could hold any friendly intercourse with him.

Yet most of the same corruptions as are found in the Romish Church are found in the Greek also; and, for the most part, even in the very same forms in both. For, the evil tendencies which are rooted (not in the characters of particular persons, but) in human nature generally, will, under similar circumstances, manifest themselves, at all times and in all places, in the same way.

The system of the Church of Rome is not like the false religion of Mohammed, who set up a pretension to a divine mission, and founded a new religion ready-made, in a very short time, on the credit of his own fancied or feigned revelations. The peculiar doctrines of his sect (though very much accommodated to the prevailing notions) *proceeded from the system* of imposture and delusion which he began. With the Romish system, it was the reverse. The peculiar corruptions of doctrine and worship of that flowed—and that gradually—from the faults and follies of man's heart; and *thence* originated the *system* of that Church.

Mohammed's religion was like a tree, with its full-grown trunk and spreading branches, planted in a soil that suits it. But the Romish system rose insensibly, like a young plant from the seed, making a progress scarcely perceptible from year to year, till at length it had fixed its root deeply in the earth, and spread its baneful shade all around.

No one, accordingly, can point out the precise time when this system of corruptions *first began*, or name any person who *introduced* it; any more than we can tell when many of the *heathen* corruptions first began, or who introduced them. We know, however, that the Church of Rome was a *pure* church in the time of the apostles, and we see it now to be *corrupt*. Now it is plain that there could be nothing wrong in belonging to the Church of Rome while it remained pure, or if it should reform itself. And, on the other hand, there can be no good in keeping clear of the Church of Rome, if you fall into like errors. Hence the true way is, to take things at the source.

Keep clear of *Mohammed*, and you will be safe from the peculiar errors of his religion.

Keep clear of the *errors* of Romanism, and you will be safe from the *Church* of Rome.

Now, if we look closely at the errors of Romanism, we shall find that they spring (as I said) from dispositions to which we are all naturally more or less prone; which may be seen working, to some



extent, among Protestants, as well as among Roman Catholics ; and which, if left to work unchecked, might, in the end, corrupt any Protestant church as completely and hopelessly as they corrupted the once pure Church of Rome. It is from these that our great danger arises ; and the principal advantage which Romanists have in striving to convert us to their system, lies not in the plausible arguments they can bring ; but in this—that we have a traitor in our own hearts—a disposition to like and choose such a system as they set before us.

1. Look, for example, at the *superstitions* of the Church of Rome, and you will see that they have really sprung from a proneness to superstition, natural to man. The invocation of saints, and adoration of images and relics, which they practise, are only the shapes taken, in their religion, by the same superstitious temper which leads heathen nations to invoke what they call gods—*i. e.* powerful but imperfect beings—rather than the Creator, and to set up idols as objects of adoration. The superstitious worship practised by Roman Catholics is just Christianity *accommodated* to that evil disposition.

Yet many persons are so far from being alive to the impiety and mischief of superstition, that they look on it as hardly a fault at all ; or, at most, as what is called a *fault on the right side*. They may smile at, or pity superstitious people, as putting themselves to *unnecessary* trouble, as being *over* scrupulous, or “religious over much ;” but, they are so far from thinking them, therefore, in any danger, that they rather regard them as all the more safe, by doing something *more* than their neighbours ; just as ignorant folk sometimes recommend a patient to “make all sure,” by *adding* the nostrum of a quack to the dose prescribed by a regular physician.

Too *religious*, in the proper sense of the word, we cannot be. We cannot have the religious sentiments and principles too strong, or too deeply fixed, if only they have a right object. We cannot *love* God too warmly—or *honour* him too highly—or strive to *serve* him too earnestly—or *trust* him too implicitly ; because our duty is “to love him with *all* our heart, and *all* our soul, and *all* our mind, and *all* our strength.”

But *too religious*, in another sense, we may, and are very apt to be ; that is, we are very apt to make for ourselves too many *objects* of religious feeling. I will endeavour to make what I mean clear to you in as few words as I can.

Almost all men are forced to feel and acknowledge that we ourselves, and the whole world we see about us, depend on some superhuman cause or power which has a control over us, and from which our happiness or misery comes. Now, the notions men form of such superhuman powers, the feelings they entertain toward them, and the course of behaviour springing from such notions and feel-



ings,—these are what we call religion; the superhuman powers (real or imaginary) being called the *objects* of religion. You will readily perceive, then, that men's religions will be different according as the *objects* of their religion are different. If a man worships a being whom he thinks *good*, but not all-knowing, he will often be satisfied with trying to *appear* good, without becoming so. If he worships one whom he thinks *spiteful*, he will try to appease his malice by doing injury and inflicting pain on himself and others. If he worships one whom he does not think *all-powerful*, he will be apt sometimes to neglect *his* service for that of some other power, if there seem to be a chance of gaining any thing by the change. If a man thinks his deity *vain*, he will try to flatter him; if weakly *compassionate*, to move his pity by doleful lamentations and complaints. In short, as the behaviour of a family will be influenced by the character of the master of the house, so the *religion* of men will be influenced by the character which they suppose to be that of the Being whom they worship.

Now, Almighty God has revealed himself as the proper object of religion—as the one only Power on whom we are to feel ourselves continually dependent for all things, and the one only Being whose favour we are continually to seek; and, lest we should complain that an infinite being is an object too remote and incomprehensible for our minds to dwell upon, he has manifested himself in his Son, the man Jesus Christ, whose history and character are largely described to us in the gospels; so that, to love, fear, honour, and serve Jesus Christ, is to love, fear, honour, and serve Almighty God—Jesus Christ being “one with the Father,” and “all the fulness of the Godhead” dwelling in him.

But, as long as our characters are not *like* God's, and we are unwilling to have them *made* like his, we are naturally averse to being brought thus into immediate contact with him; and we shrink from holding, as it were, direct converse, or “walking with” God,—from making him the object toward which our thoughts and affections directly turn, and the person to whom we come straight in our prayers, and in whose control and presence we feel ourselves at all times. Hence, men wish to put between themselves and God some other less perfect beings, with whom they can be more familiar, and who (they hope) will “let them off” more easily, when they sin, than he would.

Now, indulging this disposition is not merely *adding to* true religion, but destroying, or going near to destroy it. For, when we have once made for ourselves such objects of religious feelings, they are objects so much more suited to our corrupt nature than God is, that we soon begin to let him drop out of our minds entirely, while the inferior powers engross all our serious worship. Thus the heathens, who began with adding the worship of other



deities to that of the Supreme, ended with ceasing to worship the Supreme at all. Nor does it make so much difference as you might at first suppose, whether we think of such inferior beings as lords, having a direct control over us, (as the pagans commonly did,) or as only *influencing* the Supreme through their favour with him; as the Greeks and Roman Catholics commonly profess to think of the glorified saints. Because he from whom I expect happiness or misery becomes the uppermost object in my mind, whether he *give* or only *procure* it. If an agent has such influence with the landlord, that the agent's friends are sure of favour, and his foes are sure of hard treatment, it is the agent, and not the landlord, that the tenants will think most about; though all his power comes really from the landlord. Hence you see the danger of this kind of superstition, by which the heart, which should be God's, is *fore-stalled*, as it were, by other objects.

Thus, in the practice of invoking saints, men (1) give way to that wrong disposition of our corrupt nature which makes us shrink from direct communion with God, and strive, like Adam, to "hide ourselves" from his presence; and (2) they bring in their own *fancy* into religion; *imagining*, without proof, that the saints and angels can hear and help them. Now *fancy*, when once brought in, knows not where to stop. It is like one of those fiends in old stories, which any one could *raise*, but which, when raised, could never be kept within the magic circle. Accordingly, as soon as ever men *began* fancying objects of worship to themselves, they went on without check, multiplying their numbers, and inventing stories about them without limit. So it was with the heathens and their gods; and so the Greek and Latin churches have, in like manner, given way to men's fancies in describing the ranks and orders and names of angels, and the past adventures and present dignity of saints; legends about whom are constantly read by their monks and priests in their daily offices of devotion, which learned persons among themselves allow to be mere romances. Yet those learned persons are still bound to read those romances as part of their daily devotions; and, I suppose, do so.

But men are not satisfied with imagining for themselves *unseen* objects of worship. They wish to *see* their gods. We all find it more or less difficult to "walk by faith," [act on the belief of things unseen, as of realities,] not "by sight."

Hence the heathens set up, first, rude stones and then statues or pictures of their gods, to which they might show *outward acts* of reverence in honour of their deities; just as soldiers salute the royal standard in honour of the queen, whose arms it bears. But, from showing such outward respect, they soon came to fancy that their deities were, in some mysterious way, connected with those images, and that the power of their gods was *in* the



images, so that the images were, to all intents and purposes, the gods themselves. Accordingly, we find that God expressly forbade the Jews to make any image of him, or to bow down to, or worship the likeness of any thing whatever. And experience shows (as you will find largely proved in the Homily against Peril of Idolatry, especially Part III.) that, wherever images are set up in places of worship, they generally become enticements to rank idolatry, "preaching," as the Homily says, idolatry often more effectually by their very presence than the minister can preach against it by his tongue. Yet Christians, thinking themselves safe, because they had renounced *heathen* idolatry, began themselves to set up images and pictures, to *help* them, as they said, in their devotion by keeping the thoughts of what those images and pictures represented before their minds;—then they began to show outward marks of reverence to the pictures and images;\* and then (like the heathens) to fancy that those pictures and images were possessed of supernatural powers, and to feel toward them as if Christ and the saints *dwelt* in them.

There is certainly nothing wrong of itself in using a picture or image, to put us in mind of heavenly things, of which they are the signs; but there is great danger of our being led to feel toward the sign as if it were the thing signified; and that danger will appear the greater, if you consider some other instances in which it has been incurred.

Our Saviour, you know, in condescension to our weakness, was pleased to appoint two outward rites as signs of spiritual graces (favours) bestowed on us—baptism, or washing with *water*, as a sign of our being cleansed from sin; and partaking of *bread* and *wine*, as the sign of our enjoying the benefits of the sacrifice which he made in giving his body and blood for us.

One might think, at first, that such signs as these were safe enough from idolatry;—that no one could be so stupid as to fancy that there was any spiritual power in a few drops of water, out of a common well or river; or so besotted as to worship the bread which had been made by a baker, and which the worshipper was about to eat. Yet so strong is man's tendency to superstition, that even these simple signs could not escape being perverted by it! Men first (in spite of our Lord's warning that "the Spirit [only] quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing") began to fancy that Christ's flesh, as such, had a power of giving spiritual life; then, that Christ's body was present *in* the bread, or that the bread, by some mysterious change, became, to all intents and purposes of giving life, *all one* with Christ's body;† and lastly, that it was not

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\* As ordered, under anathema, in the Council of Trent.

† This was plainly the notion of some ancient writers, who distinguished



bread at all, but Christ's body hidden under the appearance of bread.

As for the water in baptism, though no one has *yet* pretended that it is transubstantiated into the Holy Spirit, yet many are on the high-road to it. Men fancy that there is, in the water itself, a certain spiritual power of purifying the soul; and, being naturally anxious to have as much as they can of so good a thing, they are not satisfied with Christ's baptism, which can only be performed once, but have invented another under the name of *holy water*, [that is water mixed with salt to keep it sweet, and solemnly blessed by a priest,] the sprinkling of which, as they think, purifies them from lesser sins, and is a kind of weaker baptism, which may be repeated as often as they please.\*

In all these cases it was men's misdirected reverence for the outward sign growing stronger and stronger, under the notion that they could not be too *pious*, which produced the erroneous doctrine; and then texts of Scripture were perverted, and strange philosophical explanations made out, to keep the error in countenance.

Akin to this superstition of seeking visible objects of worship, is the tendency in corrupt human nature (that is, of human feelings when not curbed and controlled by steady reason) to make worship itself consist in *outward acts* rather than *inward dispositions*. Each of these errors confirms the other, and they both spring from one root. We naturally look for some visible object to direct outward acts of worship toward. Thus the eastern part of the heavens, the *most sacred* part of a church,—the cross,—an altar,—an image or picture,—become objects *toward* which men bow or kneel; otherwise many would feel as if they were bowing, or kneeling to nothing at all. Again, an outward object of worship seems to *call* for outward marks of respect, and does not, of itself, seem to require more. "God is a SPIRIT," present to our *minds*, and therefore they "who worship him, must worship him *in spirit and in truth*," as our Saviour told the woman of Samaria, when she raised the question *where* men ought to worship God. But a picture or image does not immediately suggest the thoughts of inward worship of any kind; still less, of the best kind of worship, inward purity and uprightness of heart, and grateful love. It seems to us more like our fellow men, who can see only the outside; and as the only way in which we can show it reverence is by some outward gesture, so the more our religion becomes a religion of visible ob-

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Christ's *sacramental* body from his *natural* body. It has been held also by Protestants.

\* Bottles of this holy water are commonly sold to the people by the priests in Ireland and elsewhere; the manufacture costing the priest nothing more than the price of the salt, and of a holy candle, which is extinguished in the water during the benediction. But one candle will suffice for many gallons.



jects, the more it becomes a religion of outward worship. Both superstitions are, indeed, at bottom the same. The *same* tendency which makes men put the *sign* of an unseen object in the place of that object, makes them put the *sign* of inward worship in the place of inward worship. We are always apt to put the sign in the place of the thing signified; more especially, when, by so doing, we can get rid of what is *very* irksome to us.

When I speak thus of *corrupt* human nature, you will understand me to speak of our feelings and impulses carried *too far*, or in a *wrong* direction. All our feelings and impulses are thus apt to go wrong; and, for that reason, our understandings and consciences were given us to keep them in proper bounds, and turn them to proper objects. When I speak thus, therefore, I allow that they have a *right degree* and *right objects*. Some outward expressions of religious feeling, for example, are *natural* to us in the best sense,—that is, they would be natural to a man whose reason and conscience had as complete control as God meant they should have, over his feelings. A man who is glad, will show gladness in his looks and gait. He who is in deep sorrow will also express that feeling in his face and step; and, in the same way, a reverent deportment becomes those who are reminded of the awful presence of God by entering into direct communion with him in prayer. To check such *manifestations* of feeling would be to put an unnatural force on ourselves, and would certainly end in checking the feelings themselves. But as *violent* gestures of joy or sorrow strike a rational man as either theatrical and affected, or fit only for children or savages, in the affairs of common life,—so in religion also, if our religion be a rational one, we shall subdue the signs of our emotions, so as not to let them be showy, or such as may tempt ourselves or others to *over-act* our real feelings. Our feelings will be calm and steady, and our gestures moderate and decent. As nations in proportion as they become civilized (that is, less carried away by sense and feeling, and more ruled by reason) become less fond of outward gestures, and mere showy ornaments and finery, so will it be with a rational religion, as compared with superstition.

*Ceremonies* again—or outward rites *appointed* as signs of inward worship—may be very useful in their place. They may serve as outward signs to impress men with reverential feelings, and suggest holy thoughts: but it is plain, that, in proportion as men become more and more apt of themselves to feel such sentiments and entertain such thoughts, they will stand less and less in need of ceremonies; and that these ceremonies (unless simple and easy to be understood, and few) will tend rather to distract than to help their inward devotion, by forcing them, at every turn, to attend to unnecessary *signs*; and, while thus proving a sort of torture to the really devout worshipper, they will (if made too many and too in-



tricate) become a mere routine of bodily exercises to the ignorant and unreflecting.

*Every* religious ceremony or exercise, indeed, however well calculated, in itself, to improve the heart, is liable to degenerate into mere form, and consequently, to become superstitious: but, in proportion as the outward observances are the more complex and difficult, and the more unmeaning or unintelligible, the more danger is there of superstitiously attaching a sort of magical efficacy to the bare outward act, independent of mental devotion. If, for example, even our prayers are liable, without constant watchfulness, to become a superstitious form, by our “honouring God with our lips while our heart is far from him,” this result is almost unavoidable when the prayers are recited in an unknown tongue, and with a prescribed number of “vain repetitions,” crossings, and telling of beads.\* And men of a timorous mind, having once taken up a wrong notion of what religion consists in, seek a refuge from doubt and anxiety, a substitute for inward piety, and too often, a compensation for an evil life, in an endless multiplication of superstitious observances; of pilgrimages, sprinklings with holy water, veneration of relics, and the like.

Yet you will often hear men urging *our Saviour's example* in passing whole nights in prayer as a proof of the propriety of *long devotions* for *all men*, and alleging that the *less* able we are to attend to prayer, the more we need it, and, therefore, the *more time* we should spend in it; just as if we were to say, that, because an invalid is too weak to feel disposed to eat, or able to digest the food which might nourish and strengthen him, therefore he is to be crammed with it, when he is not *inclined* for, nor able to digest it. What lurks at the bottom of such mistakes is the notion that there is some excellency in the mere *length* or *painfulness* of our devotions.

This last remark reminds me of a class of superstitious practices which is too important to be left out here;—I mean painful sufferings—such as fasting, scourging, watching, filthy dress, or nakedness—voluntarily undergone as in themselves pleasing to God, or necessary to atone for sin. This superstition springs partly from the tendency to confound that which is, in some cases, a *mark* of true piety, with true piety itself. The practice of virtue often obliges us to “deny ourselves” by renouncing many comforts for the sake of a good conscience; and the first teachers of Christianity, in particular, were called upon to expose themselves to great peril, and great actual suffering, for the sake of Christ. Now, virtue practised under difficulties is the more admired for that reason. The greatness of the sufferings undergone, *on its account*, is

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\* “Beads” (properly *prayers* which were *bid*) have come to signify what men count their prayers by.



taken as a mark and measure of the strength of virtuous principle which enables a man to bear them. Such sufferings are then only really admirable when God's providence *calls* us to undergo them in the path of duty. But men are apt to forget this, and to confound together the thought of *merit* and of *pain*, because they see the two things often joined together. So some persons, when they found Paul speaking of his being "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness;" and not considering that these sufferings were forced upon him; and that he was so far from *courting*, that he avoided them whenever he could with honour,—fell in love with the romantic and showy outside marks of his piety, and thought they were imitating him when, for no good reason at all, they inflicted these sufferings on themselves. This was far more ridiculous than the case of Don Quixote. He *first* fancied that the world was full of robbers and enchanters, and then sallied out as a knight-errant to destroy them; but he was not so foolish as to imagine that he could become a true knight-errant, by merely riding about in armour, and *giving himself* hard knocks every now and then. Yet foolish as the thing appears when you look into it, this confusion of *merit* with *mere suffering* appears everywhere,—not in corrupted Christianity alone, but in all the forms of heathenism in ancient and in modern times. There is plainly a tendency in human nature to regard pain and privation, especially when voluntarily and gratuitously self-inflicted, as acceptable to God. The notion evidently is not derived either from Christianity as such, or from Mohammedanism, or from paganism, or from any particular form of paganism, (since it is found in all these various religions,) but from some tendency in human nature itself.

It probably, indeed, springs partly from another source than that which I have just pointed out. We are naturally averse, as I said, from the company of God—not only because we are unlike him, but because we feel that we have offended him, and may expect *punishment*. Conscience not only upbraids us for what we do amiss, but "if not forcibly stopped, naturally, and always, of course, goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own." Hence we find that, among the very heathens, there was in wicked men often a keen sense of having deserved vengeance, and a vague solicitous looking round, as it were, of the mind in every direction, expecting that, from some point or other, that vengeance would assuredly overtake them; and a starting at every unlucky accident, as if it were "a judgment for their sins." This notion of something being wanted to *appease* the wrath of Heaven for past transgressions, as distinct from reformation for the time to come, was probably one great source of the immorality of the heathen religions. Men's



thoughts were turned away from reformation for the future to atonement for the past. The anger of the higher powers, *already incurred*, was the foremost thought, and the means of averting *that* were the great object of anxiety. Now, it is quite true (as we know from revelation) that, though the good and merciful God cannot thirst for revenge like the weakest of his creatures, yet there was something more required than mere repentance on our part—not, indeed, to make us objects of God's mercy, for that we were when he *gave* his Son to die for us, but to make it wise and just for him to treat us with favour as his dear children. But the mischief was, that men's minds fixed themselves almost wholly on that *something more*; and, pursued by a continual dread of punishment, they sought, by self-inflicted penances and hardships, or costly offerings and sacrifices, to *satisfy* the divine justice. The issue was, that religion came to wear the shape of a plan for tolerating vice, at the expense of paying certain fines, and suffering certain penalties; and this will be, in the end, the shape of any religion which regards sin as something still to be *atoned for* by man himself, in the practice of rites different from ordinary right conduct. Christianity met the difficulty, by teaching us that an *atonement* has been made; but an atonement in making which *we* have no share. It tells us that sin (considered as an obstacle to full pardon on repentance) has been so for ever *put away*, as that *nothing* remains for us to do, but to accept the offer of eternal life by turning to God; and, knowing now that “our labour is not in vain in the Lord,” set ourselves, with his help, to that practice of virtue which is, and must be, at all times our duty, and without which we “shall never see God.” And the only *pain* God requires us to undergo—not as an *atonement* for sin, but as a natural *consequence* of it, is, the pain and toil which a man has to undergo in *reforming* his life—a pain and toil which will always be the *greater* the more sinful his life has been, and the longer he has continued in sin. Hence it leads us to regard the sufferings of this mortal life, not as vengeance taken on our sins, but as fatherly corrections, and a painful discipline necessary for our improvement, in which “God dealeth with us as with children; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”

Yet though this was so plainly the teaching of Christ and his apostles, superstition would not quit its hold on men; the rather, because it flatters our pride to think that we can ourselves do something in the way of atonement; and it encourages us in sin to think that we can pay off the score by a certain amount of suffering. Hence the notion, prevalent among Roman Catholics, of making satisfaction for sin by penances, or costly offerings; and the belief, that what is wanting to the full amount of suffering in this life may be made up for in the next by the pains of purgatory.



For they do not commonly regard purgatory as a place where souls are *made better* by correction, but as a place where they discharge their debt of suffering owed to the divine justice. Indeed, if the souls there were *improved* by chastisement, the remitting of the pain by indulgences would be no favour to them, but the reverse. It would be as if a physician were to prescribe some nauseous medicine to a patient, as *necessary* for the cure of his malady; and then, as a great favour, *indulge* him with a *dispensation* from taking the medicine. And, by-the-by, when Roman Catholic bishops and others speak of the great *benefit* to the soul from eating eggs instead of flesh in Lent, and, *at the same time*, of the great *indulgence* of their church in *relaxing* this rule to a certain degree, they contradict themselves; for, if egg-eating does the soul good, allowing men to eat flesh, instead, is just the same sort of *kindness* as it would be to let a sick child eat a piece of gingerbread, instead of swallowing medicine.

I have gone thus largely into the present subject, in order to show that the errors of Romanism spring from corrupt human nature, which we all carry with us. And I think that, if you reflect and inquire, you will find enough to convince you that superstition is an evil against which Protestants have need to be on their guard, even though there were no such thing as the Church of Rome in the world. Let us not think ourselves safe merely because we are not Romanists. Many of those Israelites (2 Kings xviii.) who worshipped the brazen serpent may have thought themselves safe, because they did not adore the abominations of the Canaanites, or the Moabites, or the Zidonians. The Church of Rome, again, thought herself safe, because she kept clear of pagan idolatry; not perceiving that she was indulging just the same spirit as created that idolatry. We, too, may think ourselves safe as long as we do not become Roman Catholics, and yet may indulge all the while the same spirit of superstition as makes Roman Catholic practices pernicious. To think, for example, that the mere bodily receiving of the communion, without "feeding on Christ in our hearts by faith," can be of any spiritual benefit to us, is plainly *superstition*; to think that the *washing* of baptism can save us, if we do not perform the conditions of the baptismal covenant, is plainly *superstition*; to think that there can be any merit in merely *saying* prayers, or *reading* Scripture, without attending to what we read, and really consenting to what we say, is plainly *superstition*; to think that a man's eternal happiness can be made safer by committing his carcase to consecrated ground, is plainly *superstition*.

In a word, where any thing, not in itself moral or religious, is *connected* with religion, superstition fastens upon that, because it is "worldly," and lets the rest go. Thus, when God's justice is de-



scribed as vengeance, to show us that it pursues the offender as sternly as a revengeful man *would* pursue his enemy, superstition fastens on the thought of God's thirsting for *revenge*, and regards sin only as an offence which provokes in God a desire of inflicting pain on somebody. Again, when water, or bread and wine, are made *signs* of the power of the Holy Spirit, or of Christ's body and blood sacrificed for us, superstition fastens on the water, or the bread and wine, as if they were the things themselves. When a place must be set apart for divine worship, superstition fancies that God dwells in that *place*, rather than in the hearts of the worshippers. When pictures or images of holy persons are set before us, superstition fastens on the image, as if it were the reality. When rites or ceremonies are used to *express* our devotion, superstition *makes* them our devotion. When prayers have to be *said*, superstition makes the *saying* them prayer. When good books are to be perused, superstition makes the perusal edification. When works are to be done *from a good motive*, superstition makes the outward action the good works. When sufferings *for righteousness' sake* are commended, superstition takes the suffering for merit; and so in many other instances. It seizes ever on the outward—on that which is not moral, on that which strikes the senses or the imagination—and fastens there; while true religion, on the contrary, calls on us to “lift up our hearts” from the earthly to the heavenly, and use the outward as a help to the inward.

The church—to take one instance more—must have a certain discipline and organization, as well as other societies; and so far resemble “the kingdoms of this world,” because, like them, it requires that every thing should be done in it “decently and in order.” Now, then, it is upon all that the church has, as an outward society, that superstition fastens itself, and thinks of the outward frame of the society as the one thing needful. This has already gone so far among us, that we are continually hearing those very things appealed to as fitting the church to be a “witness of the truth,” which have really least to do with that character. For, so far as uniformity of profession is produced by implicit submission to *authority*, or by any pains and penalties, or by any other means than a free and impartial examination of evidence, it ceases to have any value as *testimony*. If ten millions merely repeat on trust what *one* has said, or profess what they are compelled by law to profess, their voices are of no more real importance than if they were echoes from the side of a rock.

And again, so far as uniformity of outward practices is secured by strict discipline, or a politic structure of ecclesiastical government, (though these may be excellent things in their way,) yet, *so far*, it ceases to be *evidence* of the binding influence of Christ's spirit, leading them to “walk in love,” and “mind the same things;”



because it is notorious that heathen hierarchies (like that of the grand lama, for instance) maintain a wonderful outward unity by similar means.

But, on the contrary, a unity in the profession of essential truth, springing from free examination made by persons who are left at liberty, and encouraged to examine for themselves, this, though it will always be found mixed with many differences of opinion about lesser things, is a real testimony to the truth agreed in, which minor differences make all the more undeniable. And a cordial agreement among Christians, in furthering the cause of Christianity, with a generous toleration of smaller differences, with a feeling of love and brotherhood among those who belong to societies *independent* of each other, this is a real evidence of true Christian union.

Again, a sanctity which shows itself in self-inflicted mortifications, or outward signs of humility, or in the pomp and splendour of ceremonies—such a sanctity, whatever else it may be, is nothing *peculiar* to Christianity, and does not make the church which has it Christ's *witness* to the world. For it plainly *may* spring from fanaticism or superstition; and, in fact, does, in many false religions, at any rate, spring from these. The Chinese ceremonies are just as splendid, and even more numerous, than those of the Greek or Roman churches; and an Indian fakir is often a much greater "ascetic" than the sternest monk in Christendom.

But that sanctity which consists in the sober and consistent practice of Christian morals,—that real virtue which is "comely, honest, and of good report," always and everywhere,—that "moderation" which "uses the world without abusing it"—which is ready to sacrifice *all* when duty requires it, but is not afraid temperately to enjoy what God gives richly,—that sanctity which consists in walking "righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world," and which, borrowing no help from enthusiasm, or pride, or vanity, relies, in the meekness of a rational and serious faith, on the unseen help of God's grace,—such a sanctity as this *is* strong and convincing evidence of the divine origin of that faith from which it is seen to spring.

Do not suppose, then, that you are safe from superstition, because a great many things were cast out of our church at the Reformation, which had been abused to superstition by the Church of Rome; and every thing in itself superstitious was rejected. There are a great many things which *cannot* be dispensed with, that may be, as I have shown, abused into occasions of superstition. Such are the sacraments; prayer, public and private; instructions from the ministers of the word; buildings, and days set apart, either wholly or partly, for these purposes. All these, and many other good things which are perpetually made occasions of superstition, we cannot dispense with. The more vigilance, therefore, must we



use in our own case, and inculcate upon others, in guarding against the inroads of superstition.

In no point, we may be assured, is our spiritual enemy more vigilant. He is ever ready, not merely to tempt us with the unmixed poison of known sin, but to corrupt even our food, and to taint even our medicine with the venom of his falsehood. For religion is the medicine of the soul: it is the designed and appropriate preventive and remedy for the evils of our nature. The subtle tempter well knows that no other allurements to sin would be of so much avail, if this medicine were assiduously applied, and applied in unadulterated purity: and he knows that superstition is the specific poison which may be the most easily blended with true religion, and will most completely destroy its efficacy.

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## No. V.—PART 2.

2. FEW things strike one more strongly in the Church of Rome than the great distinctions made in it between one class of Christians and another, and the different kinds and degrees of holiness attached to different ranks of its members. These distinctions are so great that their system seems, in many respects, not *one* religion adapted equally to all, but a set of different religions fitted for different persons, and calculated for different times.

Thus, for example, the great mass of the *laity* in the Church of Rome do not commonly think themselves bound to understand what are called “the Mysteries of the Christian Faith,”—that is, certain obscure points of doctrine, the accurate knowledge of which is reserved for the learned. And, as for such points, they are encouraged to exercise what is styled an “implicit faith,” as their safest course,—that is, they are exhorted to make up their minds that *whatever* the church has determined about such matters must be true. Accordingly, though some of the laity are, at some times and in some places, *permitted*, as a privilege, to study the Scriptures, the *duty* of studying them is not now pressed upon *all*,\* by the modern Church of Rome, as it was by the ancient church.

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\* Chrysostom, for example, who was Patriarch of Constantinople, A. D. 398, after mentioning some texts which exhort to the study of the Scriptures, proceeds thus:—“But, it will be said, these injunctions are laid only on the priests. . . . But that they are laid also on the laity, you shall hear from what follows:—Let the word of God dwell in you richly, &c.”—(On the Priesthood, b. iv. § 8.) Compare the language of Pope Pius VI. (A. D. 1794) in his condemnation of the Synod of Pistoja:—“The doctrine, that ‘nothing but incapacity can excuse from reading



And, again, the "Articles of Faith" [points necessary to be believed] in the Church of Rome are more or fewer, according to the age of the world. Points of doctrine that were once not *necessary*, become necessary in process of time, by being *declared* [authoritatively set forth as true] by the governors of the church; so that (according to them) many things which might, without any great danger, have been doubted or questioned in the first century after Christ, cannot, without heresy, be doubted or questioned now. Indeed, it seems a fashionable opinion among Roman Catholics, at present, that the church only gradually *discovered* many of the articles of the Christian faith, and that a process of discovery is going on still. They are (according to this view) just on the brink of one great discovery—that it is necessary to salvation not to doubt that the Virgin Mary was conceived free from original sin;—which is called the doctrine of her "immaculate conception;" and, hereafter, of course, it may be discovered that her mother and grandmother, &c., had a like honourable distinction. And as it was discovered, at the Council of Trent, that the books of Maccabees were *inspired*, so it may soon be discovered that a thousand other books were inspired also. In short, Christianity may, in this way, be *developed* into almost any thing necessary for the times, like a lump of Indian-rubber, that may be drawn out, or squeezed in, as the owner pleases.

As for practice, too, the laity do not generally think themselves bound to "aspire to evangelical perfection,"—that is, in plain words, they are not so ambitious as to desire to be as good as they might be,—but are satisfied with the inferior holiness of a "secular" [worldly] life; while those who aim at greater degrees of holiness than ordinary men are bound to seek, are called, in a peculiar sense, "spiritual" or "religious" persons.

Then, again, among these "religious" people themselves, there are various kinds and degrees of *perfection*. Some are only so far *perfect* as to renounce marriage and continue in a single life, as a state, in itself, more holy than a married life. Others, again, besides this, make over their property to the monastery in which they dwell, and live from thenceforth only on their share of the revenues

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the Scriptures,' with the addition subjoined, that 'the obscurity brought on the very chief truths arising from neglect of this precept, is notorious,' is false, rash, and *tends to disurb the peace of souls*, and is elsewhere condemned in Quesnel." Among the condemned propositions of Quesnel are the following:—"80. The reading of the sacred Scripture is the privilege of all. 81. The obscurity of the word of God is no good reason why laymen should be dispensed from reading it. 82. Sunday should be kept holy by pious studies, specially of the sacred Scriptures. It is mischievous to desire to draw Christians off from reading these. 84. To snatch from Christians the New Testament, or to keep it closed against them, by depriving them of the means of understanding it, is to close Christ's mouth upon them."



of the monastery; which is called *poverty*, though many are in fact great *gainers* by the exchange. The special perfection of some monks consists in hard bodily labour. That of others, in perpetual silence, and abstaining altogether from flesh-meats. Others voluntarily place themselves entirely at the disposal of some superior; and their special perfection is *obedience*,—that is, choosing to give up personal responsibility, and the trouble and annoyance connected with acting for oneself.

Then, in men's devotions, there is a like variety. Some put themselves under the special "patronage" of one saint, and some of another. Some take "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," as the most frequent objects of their worship; some, the heart of Christ; some, his five wounds. It is the special aim of some to commemorate the grief of the Virgin Mary; of others, the Passion of our Lord, &c.

The clergy, too, or priesthood, are considered, as by virtue of their office, more holy than the laity. *They* [the priests] are supposed to have the exclusive privilege of offering up the body and blood of Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of the people, and so making atonement for them; and it is held that the priest alone can forgive *mortal* [greater] sins, though *venial* [lesser] offences may be pardoned without their intervention. And the priesthood are a separate class, having the exclusive power of admitting men into their order; so that the people are quite dependent upon the priests for all the spiritual benefits of which the priests are the sole procurers and distributors.

Others, again, look upon all these things as what is called a mere piece of priestcraft—an artful contrivance of the clergy to keep the people in dependence on themselves.

*Both*, in our opinion, are wrong; though, certainly, those who refer all to priestcraft maintain a much more probable opinion than the others.

For it is most manifest, from the New Testament, that Christ and his apostles did *not* intend that the church which they founded should encourage or admit such distinctions as we have spoken of among its members. But many persons, from having got a wrong notion into their heads of the UNITY [oneness] of the church, as if that unity consisted in the members of the church being all under one outward *government*, do not perceive the full amount of Scripture evidence against the practice of dividing Christians into different ranks and classes, with different Christian privileges. For you will find, on looking carefully at the principal passages in the New Testament, where the "*oneness*" of Christians is spoken of, that the uppermost thought in the minds of the sacred writers plainly was this—that all Christians are admitted to exactly *the same* gospel-privileges. Some Christians, indeed, may make a better, and some a worse *use* of those privileges; but *all* have the privileges of the



gospel equally and alike, and *all* are *bound* to make the best use of them they can.

Thus, for example, when the Apostle Paul says, (Gal. iii. 26–28,) “Ye are *all* the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ have *put on Christ*. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for *ye are all one* in Christ Jesus;” it is manifest that he is thinking not of unity of government, nor even of brotherly love, but of all Christians having the same gospel privileges.

In like manner, when addressing the [Gentile] Ephesian Christians, he says,—“Christ is our peace who hath made both [Jews and Gentiles] *one*, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us,” (Eph. ii. 14;) it is manifest that here, also, he is thinking of all believers having the *same* privileges. For he is making a contrast between the state of the Ephesians formerly, under the Mosaic dispensation, and their state now as believers in Christ. Under the law, there *was* a distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews *had* certain privileges, to which Gentiles (even though worshippers of the one true God) were not admitted. Under the gospel, on the contrary, the privileges of all are the same; the law, which made a separation, being taken away, and no new distinction made by the gospel.

Accordingly, the apostles tell us that they freely imparted, without reserve, *all* the religious knowledge which Christ had intrusted to them. They did not “shun to declare *all* the counsel of God.” (Acts xx. 27.) They describe themselves as “warning *every man*, and teaching *every man* in *all wisdom*,” that they may “present *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus.” (Coloss. i. 28.) They pray that their converts “may be able to comprehend, *with all saints*, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with [up to] all the fulness of God.” (Eph. iii. 19.)

They could not, indeed, make all persons know every thing *at once*; because learning any thing takes time, and men will make more or less progress, in the same time, according to their years, natural abilities, diligence, and zeal; and hence they speak sometimes of their disciples as being, some *babes*, and some *perfect* or full-grown men. But they had no thought of encouraging men to *continue babes*. On the contrary, the Apostle Paul blames the Hebrews very severely for remaining so long no better than children, and not “going on to perfection.” (Heb. v. 12–14 and vi. 1.) And he describes the Christian ministry as appointed “for the edifying [building up] of the body of Christ, till we *all* come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of



Christ; that we be no more *children*, . . . . but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things." The apostles then, as you see, exhorted *all* their converts to make themselves fully acquainted with the whole of the religion which they preached, and, therefore, must have thought it such a religion as ordinary men (such as the great body of the first converts were) *could* make themselves fully acquainted with.

As for the abstruse speculations and refinements, therefore, of what are called, in the Church of Rome, the "School-divines," we may be sure that, whether they are true in themselves or not, they are, at any rate, no part of the Christian *revelation*; and those who are disposed to be dazzled by the ingenuity and learning of such writers, ought to make this reflection: "If all this be so, what an *imperfect* revelation must the evangelists and apostles have given us! How much of the essential parts of Christianity they must have *omitted*, and left for learned men, in after ages, to supply!" Now, since this is not to be believed, it follows that all their speculations are either mere pieces of philosophy profanely turned into articles of faith, or idle fancies, arising out of the presumptuous wish to be wise above the measure of knowledge allotted to man.

And, as for practice, the apostles plainly knew nothing of the doctrine that men might act better than they were strictly *bound* to act, or that any one class of men were bound to be more holy than another. The apostles had learned from their Master that the first and chief commandment was to "Love the Lord with *all* the heart," and that, even when we had done all that was commanded, in this or any other precept, we should confess ourselves "unprofitable servants," who had merely done our *duty*, and no more. And, if this be so, it is absurd to say that one man is bound to be more holy than another, or that any man can, in any instance, act more virtuously than he is bound to act; because we *cannot* love God with more than *all* our heart; and, if we do give our whole hearts to him, we cannot but seek to please him in every possible way. Some may be *called* to serve God in one *way*, and some in another; but it is not the amount or kind of outward service rendered, but the inward disposition, which God values. A son who loves his father so well as to be ready to die for him, is as truly loving a child as he who actually dies for his parent; and he that is *ready to forsake* all for Christ is as dear to Christ as if he had actually forsaken all for him. Now, as all men are bound to be *ready* to give up all for Christ, he who actually, at the call of duty, forsakes all, that he may follow the Son of God, cannot be doing more than others would be bound to do in the same circumstances: *he* is only showing *proof* (to outward observers) of that love which all others are equally bound to feel, and which God



(who sees the heart) may know to be in them, without any such sacrifice.

But what Roman Catholics admire is giving up something, under the notion of its being for Christ, when they are *not called* on to give it up: which is just as if a son were, without any other reason in the world, to stab himself, in order to show his affection for his father. This is a theatrical kind of perfection, of which the apostles knew nothing. When Paul, for example, advises some persons not to marry, it is not on the ground that they would make a great and meritorious sacrifice by renouncing the comforts of matrimony, but because, in a time of persecution, they would free themselves from many cares and temptations. (1 Cor. vii. 26, 28, &c.) And, while exhorting men to have no fellowship with the *works* of darkness, he is so far from exhorting any one to retire to a monastery or a desert, that he speaks of Christians “going out of the world” (1 Cor. v. 10) as a thing which he did not and could not have contemplated. On the contrary, he desires every man to abide in the “calling” wherein he was when converted.

In the matter of devotion, too, it is plain that the apostles thought only of *one* object, and *one* kind of worship for all. They set before men “one God, and one Mediator between God and men—the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a sacrifice for all,” (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6,) and never drop a word of any other “patrons” or “intercessors,” or peculiarly acceptable forms of prayer, or peculiarly holy places for worship; except, indeed, when they *warn* us against “will-worship,” and “voluntary humility,” and the “worshipping of angels,” as things inconsistent with truly “holding the Head,” even Christ, in whom we are “complete.” (Col. ii. 10, 18, 23.)

As for some Christians enrolling themselves in special societies, in honour of some particular saints, whose peculiar directions they follow as their “rule” of pious living, or presuming to give themselves such titles as the “Society of Jesus,” as if *they* were specially and more than others his followers,—we may judge how the apostles would have treated such conduct, from the way in which Paul rebukes the Corinthians for calling themselves, some after Paul, some after Apollos, some after Cephas, and some after Christ.\* “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in [into] the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. i. 13.) So, doubtless, he would have said to the Church of Rome in our days—“Is Jesus divided? Was Francis crucified for you?† or were ye

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\* These last, it is plain, could not have thought themselves *exclusively* Christians; otherwise they would have *separated* from the communion of the rest. But the apostle is speaking of division (parties) *in* the church at Corinth, not *from* it.

† Indeed, some zealous Franciscans have gone very near asserting that he *was*. They pretend that St. Francis had the marks of our Lord’s wounds in his



baptized into the name of Dominic?" The apostles, indeed, exhorted men to be "followers of them," but it was only "as they were followers of Christ," in those things in which all might equally follow their example. (1 Cor. x. 1.)\*

Then, as for any class of sacrificing priests in the Christian church, the apostles quite disown any thing of that kind. They speak of one Priest in heaven, Jesus Christ; and, on earth, they teach Christians to consider themselves as *all priests*,—all "brought near" to God,—all "having boldness to enter into the holiest place,"—all qualified to offer "the sacrifice of praise," and to present "their bodies a living sacrifice" to God. Those, therefore, who, without being "called of God," *assume to themselves* the office of mediators and sacrificing priests over their brethren, intrude upon the exclusive privilege of the True Priest—the Son of God,—even as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram usurped an office which had been given exclusively to Aaron.† It is not enough for these men that they "stand before the congregation to *minister* unto them," but they must needs "seek the priesthood also."

Such persons, therefore, as profess to believe in the divine origin of Romanism, on the ground of its admirable suitableness to *human nature*, are plainly owning themselves *disbelievers* in the divine origin of Christianity. And when they talk of the necessity of *accommodating* the religion preached by the apostles to the tastes and manners of men, they forget that the great aim of Christianity is to REGENERATE man's nature. Christianity does not (as the law of Moses did) *permit* things on account of the "hardness" of men's hearts; because it brings the promise of the Spirit, which is given to *change* our hearts, and make us "new creatures." Accordingly, though the pagans in Italy were, in Paul's time, just as fond of altars and sacrifices, images, shows, and gaudy spectacles, as the Christians of Italy are now, that apostle never thought of accommodating the simple worship of the church to their tastes; and, though the Greeks at Corinth were quite as fond as the modern school-men of subtle and abtruse in-

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body. There is nothing in all the wild tricks of our wildest fanatics to surpass the extravagant behaviour which Roman Catholic writers attribute to, and admire in this crazy man.

\* This is one of the cases where the sense is obscured by the present division of the chapters. Read this version in connection with the last part of chapter x. "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God; *even as I* please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Be *ye* followers of *me*, even as I also am of Christ."

† Num. xvi. 9. Aaron and his sons were distinctly "called of God" to the priesthood—being, in that respect, a type of Christ, Heb. v. 4, 5. It is manifestly the *clerical* usurpers of the office of sacrificing priests, (which God has given to Christ, and not to them,) whose offence most resembles the sin of the *Levite* Korah.



quiries, Paul was so far from indulging them therein, that, for that very reason, he determined to “know nothing among them, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”\*

Indeed, when we accommodate Christianity to corrupt human nature, instead of gaining those whom we strive to conciliate, we are in danger of losing our own faith. We are like the man who boasted of having “caught a Tartar,” when the fact was that the Tartar *caught him*.

But neither, on the other hand, was it merely the craft and ambition of the *clergy* which broke up the unity [oneness] of the church, by introducing among Christians an order of sacrificing priests, and such other ranks and distinctions between brethren as we have noticed; but the natural growth of superstition brought such consequences with it.

When, for example, men had come to fancy that religious practice consisted in *outward* actions, rites, and ceremonies, splendid offerings and painful sufferings, apart from the inward disposition of the worshippers, it was natural for them to think that religious knowledge was chiefly concerned about profound *speculative mysteries*. As soon as ever men, by common consent, give up the notion of turning any kind of knowledge to a *practical* use, then studious persons will pursue inquiries into it only to gratify their curiosity, and others will neglect it altogether. Chemistry is now known to be practically useful in farming, medicine, &c., and therefore active and enlightened farmers and physicians make themselves acquainted with its principles. But, before men thought of applying it to common purposes, chemists employed themselves chiefly in searching for the “philosopher’s stone,” and the “elixir of life,” and made a wonderful mystery of their science, wrapping it up in strange and uncouth words, which were explained only to their favoured disciples; while the farmers stuck to the old *routine* of their practice, and would have laughed (as many do still) at the notion of expecting *them* to know any thing of chemistry.

And, just as gross-minded men (from being naturally averse from inward practical religion) put the mere outward signs and expressions of good dispositions in the place of true piety, so (and

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\* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2. Compare the advice of a Romish missionary:—“During the whole time I have spent in teaching the heathen, I never once met with one who was set against our religion by the *incomprehensible Mystery of the Trinity*. Many are much more offended at the *Incarnation*. . . . Wherefore the mysteries of the Passion are not to be rashly set before the converts; but, in imparting them, we should observe these cautions:—1. To dwell and expatiate upon the prodigious miracles which gave a glory to the death of Christ, which made it plain that the God-man did not die by a violent, but a voluntary death. 2. After dwelling on such topics, let the *image* of Christ, hanging on the cross, be proposed for *adoration*, illuminated with many lighted candles so as to make a grand spectacle, and adorned with other such incentives to piety, &c.”—Alexander de Rhodes, *History of Tonquin*, quoted by Fabricius, *Lux Evangelii*, pp. 669, 670.



for the same reasons) ingenious and inquisitive men were apt to put the mere knowledge of truth in the place of that practical knowledge which Christ intended that we should pursue.

For, when the sacred writers speak with commendation of “knowing God,” they always mean such a knowledge as is attended with the *practical effects* of fearing, loving, and obeying him. “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.” (Job xxviii. 28.) “He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: Was not this *to know me?* saith the Lord.” (Jer. xxii. 16.) “He that loveth is born of God, and *knoweth* God: he that loveth not, *hath not known* God.” (1 John iv. 7.)

Accordingly, in the Scriptures, it is practical knowledge only that is set before us. We are told so much about God as was necessary to make us love, honour, fear, and trust in him; so much about evil spirits, as was fit to put us on our guard against them, and keep us from falling into mischievous mistakes about their power, &c.; and so of the rest. But we are not told any thing merely to gratify our curiosity, or amuse our minds.

The value of Christian knowledge, then, consists in its fitness to regulate Christian feeling and behaviour. But men who were *over-inquisitive* (as men are apt to be) about the unseen world, did not attend to this practical character of revealed truth, but valued it chiefly as giving them new *information* about such matters; and when they found it said that Christ came to *reveal* God, and enable us to *know* him, they fancied that such a knowledge as they longed for was meant—that is, not a knowledge of God’s character and conduct toward *us*, but a full knowledge of what he is *in himself*, and of his secret decrees about the universe, and a thousand other things, of no practical importance to ourselves; and, because, with all their efforts, they could not make *Scripture* even *seem* to tell much about such things, they were forced to bring in human philosophy, and a vast mass of pretended traditions, to help it out: like one who, when the light of heaven failed, should bring a *lamp* to the sun-dial, in order to find the hour.

And as the reputation of great and abstruse knowledge flattered the learned men, who were thereby *distinguished* from the vulgar, so, on the other hand, the common people found a ready excuse for their own carelessness and sloth, in the plea that none but the learned could be expected to understand such profound *mysteries*.

It was, then, from *human nature* that this abuse of separating Christian knowledge from Christian practice, and making those who “know their religion” a distinct class from ordinary believers, arose. Hence we find this distinction into classes prevailing, not only in the Roman and Greek *churches*, but in almost all false or corrupt religions.



The priests in heathen countries, for instance, generally boast of having some higher kind of religious knowledge than the people possess; which knowledge they keep to themselves, as a thing unsuitable to the vulgar.

And in the old pagan religions of Egypt and Greece, &c., there were certain secret rites called "mysteries," in which something which was thought highly important was revealed to some approved persons called "the initiated," while carefully concealed from the rest of the people.

It is with a reference to such rites, that the apostles call the gospel the "revelation of a mystery." But if you look at the principal passages where they speak in this manner, you will find that they regard *all Christians* as "initiated," or let into the secret. For the doctrines which they published *had been* kept secret from *former* generations. "Many prophets and kings had desired to see," and "had not seen" what was then "revealed to babes." The gospel is a mystery which "*had been kept secret*, but is now *made manifest* and made known to all nations for the obedience of faith," (Rom. xxvi. 25, 26.) The apostles, therefore, speak of themselves as commissioned to "make *all men see* what is the fellowship [common participation] of the mystery;" and they add that "if their gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are (on the way to be) lost, whom the god of this world hath blinded." And, indeed, what they chiefly apply this word "mystery" to, is the very doctrine we have been considering, of the absolute unity or oneness of *all* believers.

Accordingly—as might be expected from their taking such a view of the oneness of all believers in respect of gospel privileges—the apostles regard the Christian ministry, not as a class of persons for whom some higher kind of knowledge was reserved, but as "helpers" of other men's faith—well-instructed Christians, whose duty it is to teach others all that Christian doctrine which they themselves know.

*All* well-instructed Christians are, indeed, not only permitted, but bound to assist, according as they have opportunity, in thus teaching the ignorant; but (1) since many, who would be quite competent to teach publicly, may not have leisure from other callings to attend to that employment, it is fit, and even necessary, that some persons should be *set apart* to the office of teaching, and provided with the means of attending on that work without distraction. For we all know that what is "everybody's business" is likely to be thought "nobody's business." And, again, (2) since many think themselves, or pretend to think themselves, fit to be teachers, who are not, therefore it is plainly needful that men's competency to teach others should be tried and examined before they are set apart for such a work. Now Christian ministers are



just what we have described—persons (whose competency has been examined, and declared by public authority) set apart to the office of teaching Christian doctrine to others.

The case is precisely like that of a public teacher of law or medicine. He is required to know more than his pupils, not in order that he should keep his knowledge to himself, but that he may be able to impart it to those whom he is appointed to instruct; and the sooner the pupils come to know law or medicine *as well* as the teacher, the better ought he and they to be pleased. The pupils are not to be kept in a dependence on their instructors, but enabled, by proper training, to understand and judge for themselves.

A Christian teacher is not, indeed, bound to teach the people *every thing* he knows himself. But he is bound to do his best to teach them all the *doctrines of Christianity*, by helping them to see for themselves that they are really set forth by Christ and his apostles. A teacher of mathematics may have, very properly, a great deal of critical information about the Greek text of Euclid's Elements, or the history of mathematical science, or he may be deeply versed in metaphysical questions about the notions of space and figure, &c.; but, as a mere teacher of mathematics, he is not bound to instruct all his scholars in such matters; though he is bound to try to enable them to see *the proof* of the propositions which he lays before them. And when his scholars *do* see the proof, they believe those propositions, not on their teacher's word, but because they themselves perceive them to be true; though they might not have been able to master the proof without their teacher's assistance. In like manner, a Christian teacher is bound not merely to deliver *all* the doctrines of Christianity, but to help men to see with their own eyes that they *are* the doctrines of Christianity. Otherwise, there would be two classes of Christians,—one of *masters*, who believed on *evidence*, and another of *disciples*, who believed on *the word of their masters*. Now our Saviour has expressly forbidden us to call, in this sense, any man our "master" or "teacher" upon earth; giving as his reason for that prohibition that "one is *our master*, even Christ;" and *all* we are "brethren." And this he did expressly to guard against the same abuse arising in his church which had arisen in the Jewish; in which the Scribes did keep the people dependent on themselves, under the pretence that the people could not be proper judges of the sense of the law, but must take the meaning of it on the word of the learned. Our Lord, then, clearly means that Christian teachers should not presume to debar men from inquiring whether the things taught are really the doctrines of our only master, Jesus Christ, but should, on the contrary, encourage and enable men to rely *directly* on Christ's teaching.

Indeed, if the common people could not understand the Scrip-



tures for themselves, it would be plainly proper to take the Bible out of their hands altogether; since, in that case, they could not make a *good*, and would be apt to make a *bad* use of it. They could not make a good use of it, because they could know no more about its meaning than their teachers told them; and their teachers might tell them the meaning without giving them the book; and, on the other hand, they would be apt to make a bad use of it, because, in reading it, they would be continually tempted to fancy that they *could* understand it.

But if men are bound to see that the doctrine they receive was really taught by Christ, then we *are* bound to put into their hands the authentic record of Christ's teaching contained in the holy Scriptures; and then all who receive such doctrine, upon the ground of seeing it to be the meaning of Christ's own words, will be equally, and in the same sense and degree, immediately "disciples of Christ."

No doubt, however, more knowledge of things *connected with religion*, may be properly required in teachers than is required of all Christians. Some of the *objections*, for instance, to Christianity, are such as some able and learned men have found answers to, but which the generality of Christians cannot be expected to answer, or even to *understand*. But this circumstance does not divide Christians into classes, admitted to unequal Christian privileges.

A man who is acquainted with the virtues of certain medicines, and knows how to apply them, for the cure of some disorders he is subject to, has no advantage over another man who is ignorant of those medicines, and at the same time *exempt from those diseases*. And, in like manner, one man possessing learning and powers of deep reflection, may perceive certain difficulties, and feel the force of certain objections, which do not strike an ordinary man; at the same time, he may so apply his knowledge and his abilities, as to find answers to those objections, and solutions of those difficulties. But another man inferior to him in mental powers and cultivation, if he is but able to give a good "reason of the hope that is in him" is not worse off, *as a Christian*; though as a philosopher he is inferior to him, and though he is unable to understand either the answers to certain objections, or the objections themselves.

In this, and other similar cases, the differences between one man and another are not *made by Christianity*, or introduced by the gospel, but they are such as exist on *all* subjects.

But from perceiving that those who have leisure and abilities beyond what fall to the lot of the generality, are enabled and may be expected to acquire a larger share of learning generally, and of what is called "theological learning" among the rest, men came to fancy that none but "learned theologians" could understand the Scriptures; not considering that the great uses of theological learn-



ing are, either (1) to enable the learned to make the meaning of Scripture *plain* to the unlearned, or (2) more fully to establish the proof of the authority of Scripture, and answer learned objections to it.

Then, again, men readily fell, without being distinctly aware of what they were doing, into a habit of confounding the case of the clergy with the case of other professions. They *feel* as if the clergyman stood, in religious matters, in much the same place as the soldier in respect of military, and the sailor in respect of naval affairs, and the physician in respect of remedies for bodily diseases, and the lawyer in legal matters.

We are very apt, too, when any thing troublesome is to be done, first to wish and then to think that it may be done *by proxy*; and, if some other persons are *peculiarly bound* to do it, we are apt to fancy that their doing it is enough, and that we are not bound at all.

A parish-clerk, for instance, was originally a *clerk* [person able to *read*] appointed for the purpose of *leading* the people (who could not read their prayer-books) in making the responses. *He* was, therefore, peculiarly bound to make the responses in an audible voice, in order that others might be able to make them after him. But, in course of time, people forgot the reason *why* he was so bound, and fancied that *he only* was obliged to repeat them. In like manner, when people perceived that the clergy were *peculiarly bound* to know the truths of religion, *in order that they might teach others*,—and to strict life, *as an example to others*,—and to take a leading part in the service of the church, *for the sake of order in the congregation*,—they forgot the reasons, and began to think that the clergy were to do all these things *for them*.

And in proportion as they eased themselves, they exacted more from the clergy. They required them to *know*, or pretend to know, more of Christian doctrine than could be *taught* to the laity. They required them to *set* such an example as ordinary men could not *follow*, making the sanctity of their priests consist in a single life, and other points *peculiar* to their profession. And they made the service of the church chiefly consist in rites which the priest only *could* do, and which he *might* do without the presence of any congregation at all,\*—that is, in prayers and sacrifices *for the people*, performed in a language which they do not understand.

All this, again, was helped forward by the continual growth of superstition. For if, as superstition leads men to think, the service of God consists in outward rites, and if painful sufferings have a value in themselves to purchase pardon,—apart from the inward

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\* As in what are called, in the Church of Rome, “solitary masses.”



disposition of the worshippers,—there might really be something plausible in such notions of serving God *by proxy*. *Outward actions* often may be done by others for us; and, even when that is not possible, the reasons and proper way of doing them may be *studied* for us by others, who can tell us what to do, without requiring us to understand any thing about the matter. If we owe a *debt* of money, another may pay it for us. We can hire a soldier to fight for us, or a pilot to steer our ship, or a barrister to plead our cause; or we may get the advice of a skilful physician, and follow his directions implicitly.

And, as we saw that men's natural disposition to shrink from the presence of God led them to fancy that a number of inferior unseen beings stood between them and the Most High, so, similar feelings led them to *thrust* the priests *forward* between themselves and the unseen world. Man's heart (except when divinely purified) is too much turned from God to take delight in serving him; while yet, except when unusually depraved, he retains enough of the image of his Maker to have a natural reverence for religion, and a desire that God should be worshipped. Hence the disposition men have ever shown to substitute the devotion of the priest for their own; to leave the duties of piety in his hands, and to let him serve God in *their stead*.

Thus the service of God became, as it were, the *profession* of the clergy, and men looked rather to the *authority, skill, and intention\** of the minister, than to their own dispositions for making the public prayers and the sacraments effectual means of grace; and *sanctity* became the profession of the monks and friars, the mass of the people being quite satisfied that it was *somewhere* in their church, and feeling as if all the members must come in for a share of the *merits* of those holy persons.

The great power and influence, then, of the clergy and monks in the Church of Rome are quite as much owing to the disposition of the people to shrink back, as to their own wish to stand for-

\* The Council of Trent, Sess. vii., determines thus:—

“If any one shall deny that there is not required in the ministers, while they make and administer the sacraments, an *intention* at the least of doing what the church does, let him be accursed!” In spite of these plain words, some Roman Catholics assert that their church requires only the *outward appearance* of an intention on the part of the minister. This view was, indeed, taken by Catharinus, who was himself present at the Council of Trent; but he is censured on that account by Bellarmine, the greatest modern theologian of the Church of Rome. Hence we see what admirable means the decrees of general councils are for putting an end to disputes, and what infallible certainty there is in that church about the indispensable means of grace; when, after the judge has spoken, it remains for *private judgment* to interpret the sentence on a point which involves the safety of all. For, if the doctrine of intention be true, (as Bellarmine explains it,) no Romanist can be sure that he was ever baptized, or that the Pope is a priest, or that the wafer he worships is any thing more than a mere wafer.



ward. Nay, ambition seems, in some cases, really to have sprung up afterward. A man who is as distrustful of himself as others are, (or nearly so,) may sometimes have "greatness thrust upon him" which he does not covet, but would rather decline; and then, from finding that he performs his part cleverly, he may grow confident; and, perceiving the advantages of his new position, use all possible means to secure and increase them. The Romish hierarchy did but take advantage, from time to time, of men's *natural disposition*, and their propensity to serving God by proxy, or "vicarious religion," as it may be called—engrafting successively on the system of their church such practices and points of doctrine as favoured that propensity, and which were naturally converted into a source of profit and influence to the priesthood. And, as long as the *sources* of such errors remain among ourselves, we shall need to watch against the danger which has actually overtaken others.

For you will do well to remember how the movement which has ended in so many conversions to Romanism began. It did *not* begin by aggressions of Romish priests upon us, but by practices and notions resembling Romanism springing up among ourselves. Members of our church, who declare that they never dreamed at first of ever passing over to Rome, grew gradually more and more like Romanists in their opinions and behaviour, and then found to their own and their neighbour's astonishment that Romanism was the very thing into which their principles and feelings naturally grew.

Guard, then, against these principles and feelings of corrupt human nature, and you will effectually guard against priestcraft and its odious consequences.

3. Among those consequences there is none more loudly blamed as the peculiar characteristic of the Romish system than "pious frauds"—artifices used to make men (what is called) *devout* and submissive to the church.

To what an extent the Church of Rome has carried that practice is, indeed, notorious.

That church has not only permitted and encouraged the circulation of a thousand legends and stories about "the saints" among the common people, which the learned not only *disbelieve* but laugh at; but it has solemn services, in which known falsehoods of this kind are deliberately asserted in the lessons read, and even implied in the prayers offered to God; and relics are shown and devoutly worshipped in their churches as genuine, which are probably all spurious, and which cannot possibly be all true, inasmuch as the *same* relic is said to be in several different churches; and pretended miracles are put forward, which must proceed, in many cases, from deliberate and calculating imposture. And there are many practices among the people which the more enlightened often



plainly see to be superstitious, and yet connive at, as producing, on the whole, a good effect, and done with a *pious intention*.

Now, all this was not the *mere* consequences of priestcraft; for, though some of the frauds alluded to may have been, from the first, practised solely for the sake of getting money or power into the hands of the priests, yet in many others, no doubt, the end aimed at was *right in itself*, and, in many more, *seemed right and laudable* to those who took dishonest means for compassing it.

You may often have noticed how apt thoughtless people are to save themselves trouble by *deceiving* children into compliance with their will. They keep a child from straying into dark lanes by stories about ghosts and hobgoblins, or they persuade him to leave the room by (falsely) promising him a sugarplum elsewhere, and so forth. Such lies (besides being wrong) always bring more trouble in the end than they save for the present. Still they do save present trouble; and so those in charge of children are tempted to practise such deceit; which they commonly excuse by saying that it is "all for the child's good," and that "children cannot be managed otherwise."

Now, when the people were brought into the condition of children, and left without rational instruction in religious matters, it was natural to think of treating them as children are too often treated, and deceiving them for their good.

The priests *found* the multitude ready of themselves (as ignorant persons are) to believe marvellous tales and romantic adventures, and fancy they were surrounded by miracles and wonders; and it is probable that many of the false legends were originally stories that sprang up at first (as strange stories will) among the people themselves, partly from mistake, and partly from pure fancy.

Now, when the clergy perceived that the belief of such fictions made the people apparently more devout, they thought them, at worst, but *innocent* illusions, which had a good effect on those who *could not* know better; and so the mischief went on, till, at last, the devotion of the people (such as it was) was really, to a great extent, built upon the belief of such falsehoods; and there was real danger that, if *that* support were taken from it, *all sense* of religion would be destroyed in their minds.

Now, truth is a steady thing, and acts steadily through the reason by the weight of evidence. But, when you work on men's fancies and feelings alone, you work on a part of our minds which flags and becomes sluggish, when not continually roused by fresh and fresh excitement; just as a drunkard is tempted to drink more deeply every day, from finding that his constitution needs the stimulant more and more.

Hence, when once the clergy had *begun* to work on the people



in this way, they found themselves tempted to go on, and *invent* new legends and miracles when the old had lost their interest, while many who would have scorned to *invent* such things, yet thought themselves justified in tolerating them, from a dread of “unsettling men’s minds,” and shaking their faith in the truths of religion, by exposing the falsity of what had been mixed up with them.

Here then, again, in the case of pious frauds, the thing to be guarded against is that corrupt inclination, natural to all men, of sacrificing what we know to be *true* to what may seem *expedient*, and “doing evil that good may come.” We must stand clear of popish frauds and Jesuitical falsehoods—not merely because they are *popish* and *Jesuitical*, but because they are frauds and falsehoods.

4. Again, the way in which human authority is put, by the Church of Rome, in the place of divine, is another error which some persons trace entirely to priestcraft; whereas the truth is, that it springs quite as much from a *craving* after infallibility on the part of the people,—as we hope to show you plainly in the next Number.

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## No. VI.

WE Protestants are accustomed to think and speak of the way in which the Church of Rome requires implicit submission to all its teaching, as a mere piece of priestcraft,—a *tyranny* of the priests over the people; and to *wonder* how the people can be so slavish as to submit to such tyranny. But we should remember that this tyranny could never have been established at first, if the people had not been, themselves, disposed to submit to it. After it was once set up, people might be frightened and forced into outward submission; but it certainly was not set up originally by force. It *grew* up, like many other corruptions, in several other churches, as well as the Romish, out of the soil of human nature.

The truth is, that there is a strong tendency in human nature to save itself from the trouble of inquiry and the uneasiness of doubt. We do not like to be left for a moment in uncertainty or suspense; we are impatient of the labour of examining things for ourselves; we are alarmed at the danger of mistake, and uneasy under the sense of personal responsibility; and so we are disposed beforehand to accept a guide in religion, who shall confidently claim the power of conducting us with unerring skill, and who shall tell us that we have nothing to do but *follow him*. The Church of Rome, then,



only took advantage of men's natural disposition, by offering itself as such a guide. That church was, long ago, the most *conspicuous* church in Europe, and, therefore, naturally drew men's eyes toward itself; and seemed to bid fairest for having that authority which they were eager to find *somewhere*.

Now it would, no doubt, be a great convenience if we had no need (whether in religion or in other matters) to examine *each point* separately, and make up our minds upon a *great number* of things, but only to settle *one point* once for all,—*who* is the proper guide in such matters?—and then follow his directions in each instance. This would be a great convenience, if we could find the *right guide* more easily and surely than we could find the *right way* without him.

But, even then, we should have first to *find* our guide, and satisfy ourselves that he was competent to direct us. And it is plain that we could, in no case, be *more* certain of going right in following a guide, than we were of *his* ability and willingness to conduct us aright. For no building can be more firm than the foundation it rests on.

If a traveller, for example, tell us something about France or Spain, which he says he witnessed in those countries, we cannot believe the facts on his word, *more* firmly than we believe that he is an honest man and was really there. Every thing will depend on the *reasons* we may have for trusting his veracity. If we cannot be very sure of *that*, we cannot be very sure of the truth of what he tells us.

So also, in the case of the Church of Rome, no one can reasonably believe, what the church teaches, on its word, who is not first satisfied that the Church of Rome has authority to declare, absolutely, what Christ's religion is. If *that* be doubtful, then every thing that church teaches is (so far) equally doubtful. And if *we* cannot be *infallibly certain* that the Church of Rome is an infallible guide, we cannot be infallibly certain of any thing on its word.

If, for example, a man believes the Church of Rome to be infallible, *because* the Lord said to Peter: "Upon this rock I will build my Church," and because *he thinks*—that, in that text, Christ promised to make Peter and his successors infallible; and because *he thinks*, further, that the Bishops of Rome are the successors of Peter, meant in the promise; it is plain that he cannot be *more certain* of that church's infallibility, than he is of the correctness of his judgment upon each and all of those matters on which he grounds his belief in the church's infallibility. He cannot be infallibly sure that the popes are unerring guides, unless he be first infallibly sure, not only that all Christ said was true, but also that Christ really made this promise; and that the meaning he puts upon it is correct; and that the popes are the legitimate successors of Peter; and that the present Bishop of Rome is a lawful Pope.



And so, on *whatever* grounds a man builds his faith in the infallibility of the Church of Rome, he must first be infallibly sure of *them*, before he can reasonably think himself infallibly sure of what is built upon them. And it is plain that, in making up his mind about the infallibility of his guide, a man cannot reasonably rely upon that very guide, as if he were already proved infallible. Here, then, is at least one point, in which we *must*, of necessity, exercise our private judgment, whether we think ourselves fit for such a task or not; while, upon the correctness of our judgment in *this* point, the whole security of our faith and practice, in following the guide whom we have chosen, must depend.

Now what corrupt human nature anxiously craves for is, to be infallible ourselves,—and that without any trouble or difficulty. Many Roman Catholics, indeed, conceal from themselves and others, that *this* is really what they seek, by saying that all they ask for is an *infallible guide*.

But it is plain that this is not *all* they really seek; because they are dissatisfied with the guidance of the Holy Scripture, which they themselves acknowledge to be infallible.

They say the Scripture is not sufficient, because they cannot be *certain* that it is the word of God, or again of its true meaning, but by being assured of these things by the church.\*

What they want, then, manifestly is, that they should themselves be infallibly certain of being guided aright in each instance; and this is just, in other words, desiring to be themselves infallible. A Roman Catholic will, indeed, often speak of himself as fallible, and as having no expectation of being otherwise. But his meaning must be (supposing him quite certain that he has an infallible guide, always accessible, and to which he constantly conforms)—his meaning must be, that he is fallible in all points not determined by the church, and that, in what the church has determined, he *would* be fallible if left to himself; that his exemption from the

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\* In saying this, indeed, they, on their own principles, run into great inconsistency; because, if *they* cannot know the Scripture to be the Word of God, except the infallible church tell them so, the question is obvious,—How, then, does *the church* know the Scriptures to be the Word of God? If *they* cannot tell the true meaning of Scripture, without the explanation of the infallible church, how does the church discover the true meaning of Scripture? The church must, plainly, know these things *before* it propounds them to the faithful; and therefore it must be *possible* to know them by some other means besides the declaration of the church.

This, they will say, is by divine inspiration granted to the Pope and other governors of the church. But how are we to prove this inspiration? Is it by an appeal to Scripture itself?—that is, to the very book whose divine authority, and whose meaning, can only be known by the aid of the church? By first assuming the very thing to be proved! or, by what Paul calls “the signs of an apostle”—the public display of undoubted miracles? But the pretended miracles of the Romanists are only witnessed by those who are already believers.



possibility of error is not *inherent*, but *derived*. But actually and practically, he does consider himself infallible.

Though the gnomon [hand or pointer] of a sun-dial has no power of itself to indicate the hour, yet, when the sun shines on it, the motions of its shadow must be as correct as those of the sun's rays which it follows. And, in like manner, *he* is infallible, practically, in his belief, who always believes exactly what an infallible church or leader believes.

It is very foolish, therefore, in Roman Catholics, to laugh at those Protestants who claim, each man for himself, to be infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit; since *they* only claim to be, each man infallible, by following infallible *guidance*; and Roman Catholics do the same.

And, as for claiming immediate inspiration, it is just as reasonable to think that God inspires each particular Christian, as that he inspires the popes or bishops; whom Roman Catholics must mean, when they speak of the *church* as a guide.

For if the Pope or the bishops are to guide others, they must first be guided themselves. Now what guide do they follow when they set forth *new articles of Faith*? If the Scripture,—that is a rule which others have as well as they: and if it be a sufficient rule to *their* private judgment, why not to Protestants? If Tradition,—that is a rule which others too may have recourse to. But, if the Holy Spirit supplies them with new knowledge, over and above the plain meaning of Scripture and Tradition,—that is plainly saying that they are directly *inspired*; which is just what they laugh at some Protestants for claiming to be. Nor can *they* consistently object that the differences among those Protestants who equally claim inspiration prove all their claims unfounded; since *churches*, too, equally claiming infallibility, are divided just as much in doctrine and discipline. The Greek Church, for example, claims to be infallible as much as the Roman, and yet differs from it in its creed and government. And the Irvingites and Mormonites claim to be infallible, as churches, in as high a manner as either the Greek or the Roman Church. If differences then between *men* claiming inspiration prove none of them to be inspired, differences between *Churches* claiming infallibility will prove that none of these is infallible.

But the truth is, that both Roman Catholics and fanatical Protestants delude themselves by giving way to a craving after infallibility, which is part of our *corrupt* nature.

For it is plainly *not* God's intention to exempt us from all danger of mistake, and all labour of inquiry, and the responsibility of exercising our own judgments, whether good or bad, in matters of the greatest importance.

In all the most important affairs of this life, we are obliged to



act upon mere probabilities, and sometimes very weak probabilities. With respect to this life, as well as the life to come, our highest interests require us to act continually with regard to the future. Yet, we have no infallible guidance at all with respect to what will happen to-morrow. We are left to calculate, as we best can, what is most likely; and consider carefully what is, under all the circumstances, the most prudent course for us to take. Nay, it is very remarkable that our knowledge is much more full and complete of things which do *not* directly concern us, than of those which do. We can foretell the motions of the heavenly bodies for centuries to come; but, as to things at our own doors, we “know not what a day may bring forth.” The things *within our foresight* and certain knowledge are *out of our power*; and the things *within our power* are *out of our foresight*.

Thus, however convenient or desirable it might seem to us that we should have some infallible guidance in the things of this life, it is plain that God has determined otherwise. Each man is left, whether he be of great or of mean capacity, in the midst of many difficulties, and in danger of going wrong continually, to find out what is most likely to serve his interest, and act accordingly. The courts of justice, which decide about our property, our liberty, and our lives, are not infallible. The art of medicine has no infallible certainty to guide its practice. Kings and parliaments, who have to provide for the safety of whole nations, can only take the measures which *seem to them* best; and may be, and often are, mistaken.

Some, indeed, have sometimes indulged the natural craving after infallibility, even in the affairs of this world. They have fancied that they could discover malefactors to a certainty, by spells and charms; or they have (from their own wishes) put faith in quack medicines, that have been “puffed” as infallible cures; or they have believed the flattering predictions of cunning fortune-tellers and astrologers. But, in the things of this world, *experience* soon detects such impostures or vain fancies. Time shows, in the issue, that what men believed to have happened did not happen, and what they expected to occur did not occur. Pretenders to infallibility in religion have this advantage (if it is to be reckoned one) over other quacks, that the mischief which they do cannot be fully known till the great day. They make promises about the unseen world, and the victims of their deceit cannot come back from the grave to warn others.

Hence, the belief in infallible guidance is much more common in religious matters than in the affairs of this world. And (you will observe) in religious matters themselves, infallible guidance is much more confidently claimed for *points of belief* and articles of faith, than for moral conduct.



The Roman Catholics themselves do not generally pretend to have infallible guidance in matters of moral conduct. Their "Casuists" [divines, who explain what is right to be done in difficult cases] talk much about the difference between *mortal* and *venial* sins, and tell us that, though mortal sins deserve everlasting punishment, venial sins do not; yet they cannot determine, with absolute certainty, what sins are mortal, and what venial, or be infallibly sure of the distinction between them, what it really is; because the church has given them no information.

Again, these Casuists differ greatly among themselves in their rules of moral conduct; and some tell their disciples that they may safely, and even laudably, do things, which others (in the same infallible church) declare to be detestable wickedness.

And it is curious to observe that, where Popes or Councils *have* determined about moral conduct, *there*, and in such cases, many Roman Catholics refuse to be guided by them. The popes, for example, have over and over again assumed the power of absolving subjects from their oaths of allegiance, and have stirred them up to rebel against their lawful sovereigns; yet many Roman Catholics own that it is impious blasphemy to pretend that the Pope has any such power. Here, then, it is plain that men are forced to use their private judgments, not only *without*, but *against* the decisions of the highest authority in their church.

Again, both Popes and Councils, and all the bishops and clergy of the Roman Catholic Church, for whole centuries together, inculcated the persecution of heretics, as a plain *duty*. They excited the princes of Europe to destroy heretics with fire and sword, as the enemies of Christ,—of him who came "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them;"—and they praised and rewarded those princes who were most forward in that work, and made the most bloody massacres of their subjects, when those subjects chanced to be heretics. And the duty of persecuting heretics is plainly laid down in the canon law, which is the public law of the Roman Catholic Church: nor has any Pope or Council ever, in the least degree, shown any disposition to retract any of the declarations made in former times on that subject. On the contrary, the very last Pope, Gregory XVI., expressly condemned toleration as a most sinful practice; and the present Pope seems to use all his influence to prevent the toleration of Protestants, wherever it can be *safely* prevented.

Now, if persecution be not a *duty*, it is plainly a very great *sin*. Those Roman Catholics, therefore, who do not believe that they are *bound* (when they have the power) to persecute Protestants, must confess that the popes and prelates of their church have been for ages together exhorting men to commit a *sin*, contrary to Christ's will, and in direct opposition to the leading of that blessed



spirit of love and meekness which was given to guide the faithful into "all the Truth." They must acknowledge that, in this most important matter, they have been left to the guidance of their own private judgment; and, in the exercise of their private judgment, have discovered the highest authorities of their church to have fallen into grievous error; and *that* not in a point of mere speculative faith, but of practice.

Now, surely no one will say that errors in mere belief are of more consequence than errors of practice,—that *believing* wrongly is a more shocking crime than *acting* wrongly.\* Yet we see that the church was left without any authority, such as all Roman Catholics will agree to count infallible, in matters of practice, even where those matters were of the greatest importance.

But, further, even in points of faith, it plainly never was God's intention to give us such infallible guidance as corrupt human nature craves for. He never gave to man such a guide as infidels demand, and weak Christians pretend to have,—a guide whose authority should display itself like the sun, which no one who opens his eyes can help seeing,—a guide whose infallibility can be known and trusted, without the trouble of examination, or the risk of mistake.

When our Saviour himself was upon earth, he was, indeed, an infallible guide. But were no care and examination required for discovering his real character? Was there no danger to any Israelite of mistaking his Messiah for a false prophet?

We know that it was precisely those who refused to examine,—who gave themselves up with an implicit faith to the guidance of their church, and relied absolutely upon the teaching of their priests and learned men,—it was precisely those persons who would not exercise their private judgment in determining whether or not Jesus was the Messiah, who rejected and crucified the Lord of glory.

Observe how *naturally* the great body of the Jewish people acted in rejecting our Saviour.

Christ censured the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees; but the people said, "These are the traditions of our church, received for many ages back without question; and it is not to be thought that God would have left us to false teaching so long, from the lips of those whom he himself commissioned to instruct us."

Christ appealed to his miracles; but the Scribes and Pharisees

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\* On the contrary, the only reasons why belief can be said to be (morally) right or wrong are—1. Because it is in our power to *act* so as to guard against error and discover truth; or, 2. Because belief influences the *actions* which spring from it,—right belief leading to virtuous conduct, and wrong belief to the reverse. Mere *belief* is praised or blamed as the *effect* or *cause* of virtue or vice, as the case may be.



had determined that they were wrought by Beelzebub. He appealed to the Scriptures; but the people did not venture to judge of the sense of Scripture, and they knew that their teachers explained them otherwise. Have any of the rulers, said they, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? They thought themselves safe in following the decision of their church; and, therefore, they demanded that he should be put to death, as an impostor and blasphemer. And for the few who did receive him, it was by boldly exercising their private judgment, by candidly examining the evidence set before them, and by courageously defying the authority of their church and nation, that they kept themselves innocent from the blood of that "just one."

Again, the apostles were infallible guides; yet we do not find that they ever preached the gospel in such a way as to free men from the trouble of examination, or save them from the dangers attending the exercise of private judgment. We do not even find them beginning by proving, first, their own authority, and then requiring men to believe the gospel on their authority. They come forward in the first instance as *witnesses* of the resurrection of Christ.\* They work miracles in *Christ's name*, to show the people that *he* was really alive and present with them; and they reason out of the Scriptures to show that it was foretold that the Messiah should suffer, and rise from the dead.

And as for their own authority, *that*, it is plain, was, in some instances, questioned and doubted by many, in their own lifetime; and the Apostle Paul is obliged to caution the churches against "false apostles" and "deceitful workers;" and the Apostle John exhorts believers not to "believe every spirit, but *try* the spirits whether they be of God, because many false teachers are gone out into the world."

Nor, again, is there any reason to suppose that any of the apostles was in such a sense infallible as that he *could not* teach false doctrine. They were, indeed, so guided by the Spirit, as to have the truth clearly revealed to them, so that they always *knew* it themselves; but it does not appear that they were compelled always to *speak* the truth. *Their* infallibility does not seem to have been like that which Roman Catholics ascribe to their popes, whose decisions they are ready to follow, even when they know them to be personally the worst of men, and perhaps infidels in their hearts.

The apostles Peter and Barnabas, for example, were, in one instance, induced by false shame to dissemble the truth which had been revealed to them, and, by the weight of their example, to draw others also into the same fault. Gal. ii. 11-13.

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\* Acts ii. 32; iii. 15; iv. 20, 33; v. 32; x. 39, 40, 41.



Paul, too, expressly tells the Galatians, that if he himself were to preach any other gospel to them than that which they had already received, they should not listen to him; so that, even in the case of the apostles, men were bound to exercise their own judgments, and not required blindly to receive every thing they said; but when they spoke as witnesses, to consider the proofs of their integrity; when they reasoned, to examine their reasoning; when they published revelations, to weigh well the miraculous evidence of God's speaking in them.

Even in the first setting up of the church, then, when there *were* infallible living guides on earth, Christians were not exempted from the duty of examination, and from the risks and difficulties attending on it. But, on the contrary, those who were disposed to shrink from the danger and difficulty of judging for themselves, found, no doubt, many plausible excuses for not attending to the evidence laid before them. The pagans said that "their religion was the old one—the faith of their forefathers, which had covered the earth with beautiful temples and splendid rites, and under which the Roman empire had been always happy and prosperous; and that all the world were agreed in condemning this upstart sect, which had lately appeared, and sought\* to change every thing that was hitherto established." The Jews said, that "they followed their priests, who had an unbroken succession from Aaron, who was expressly called of God; and that they would not listen to men who charged their rulers with murder and blasphemy, and who sought 'to change the customs which Moses had delivered to them.' " Thus pagans and Jews refused to examine, and adhered to the *authority* of their teachers, rather than run the risks of exercising their "private judgment."

You see, then, that, in order to believe the Christian religion itself, men are required to examine evidence and exercise judgment; and that, however *we* might wish to be directed infallibly to the true religion, without any trouble or risk, God has not been pleased to comply with such wishes. There is no question mankind are more divided about than this—*which* is the true religion? And, even up to this time, the great majority of mankind have determined the Christian religion *not* to be the true one. And they have, for the most part, been led thus to determine against *it*, and in favour of some other, by refusing to examine, and trusting to the authority of the *guides* next at hand.

Now, a man must be a Christian first, before he can even raise the question whether there *is* an infallible church. And, if he decides that there *must be* one, because it is incredible that God

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\* "We are Moses' disciples: we know that God spake unto Moses; but as for this man, we know not whence he is." John ix. 28, 29.



should leave men to the hazard and difficulties of examination and private judgment—he is plainly deciding *for* an infallible *Christian* church on grounds inconsistent with believing that there is any Christian church at all.

But we are *compelled* to judge for ourselves not only as to the truth of Christianity, but also as to the claims of different persons and parties to be the infallible guides we seek. And, as for these, observe the self-contradiction into which men blindly run. Certain passages of Scripture are alleged as implying that a certain church is the infallible guide appointed by Providence to supersede our private judgment, which is incapable of deciding aright as to the meaning of Scripture. But how am I to know that such is the true sense of such passages? If we *are* competent to judge of their meaning, then our alleged unfitness for judging, and the necessity thence inferred, are done away. If we are *not* competent to judge of the meaning of any doubtful passages, then, though we may admit the necessity of an unerring interpreter, we can never be sure that we have found one. Thus men are supposed incapable of determining whether Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is to be adored, and yet capable of determining between the rival claims of the Greek and Roman churches. Men are supposed incapable of determining from Scripture, or tradition, or reason, whether public prayers should be said in an unknown tongue, and yet capable of determining whether the Pope—or a general council—or the whole body of the bishops—or the whole body of the faithful, be the infallible guide which Christ left to his church.

For Roman Catholics themselves are not agreed as to who that guide is. Many say that the Pope is that guide; yet Dr. Delahogue, for example, in a book used as a text-book in some Roman Catholic colleges, goes so far as to say: “If (which God forbid!) the Pope, even teaching authoritatively, and as the head of the church, (*ex cathedrâ*,) should *err*, yet the visible centre of teaching would not fail, but would continue in the Roman see, considered as representing the whole line of the successors of Peter, who *have professed* the sound doctrine received from him; which doctrine becomes in a certain manner the property of the Roman see which they held. And if the Roman Church itself should adhere to its Pope, a visible centre of doctrine would still exist in the body of the chief pastors of the church, which might make itself conspicuous by a solemn declaration, such as took place *against the will of the popes*, in the Council of Constance. . . . Furthermore, it is to be noted that the centre of unity, *though necessary to the church*, may be interrupted, so far as thereby all Catholics are held in the same visible bond of communion. For, *during the forty years of the great schism of the West*, the various competitors for the popedom had, each, Catholics in obedience to him, and



*each excommunicated all who were not his adherents. But how none of these parties were schismatical we have shown already.*"\*

Men, however, are so eager to attain certainty, that they shut their eyes to the doubtfulness of the very authority on which they rely; as if a seaman were to hope to make the ship steady by casting anchor on a floating plank.

Again, the alleged necessity is, for an infallible interpreter of Christ's will universally and readily *accessible*. And this no church can even pretend to have provided. Supposing a central infallible church to exist, it is not one Christian in ten thousand that can put himself in direct communication with its supreme governors. Each member of the church may, indeed, use its formularies, and may assign to them the same authority as to Scripture; but he can be no more competent to interpret the one than the other, or to supply aright any omissions. He is still in want of an infallible guide to direct him how to conform with unerring exactness to his church.

The Council of Trent, for example, has determined that "*due honour should be paid to images*:" but the question is, what honour is *due*? Now, some Roman Catholics maintain that men are bound to render the *same honour*† to an image as would be due to the person whose image it is; others, that we should only render the image an *inferior* kind of honour. How, then, is an unlearned Roman Catholic to discover the true meaning of the council in this decree? It is plain that he requires, for that purpose, some infallible interpreter of what the council has said. And this guide must be, to the great mass of mankind, the *pastor* under whom each is placed. The pastor's conformity to the church must be taken on his own word. If *he* be either ignorant or erroneous, or dishonest,—if, in short, every single pastor be not himself infallibly secured against ignorance and error, and *compelled* also to speak the truth which he knows—the Christian people, whose incompetency has been all along presupposed, may be as much misled as in their perusal of the Scriptures.

But, if it be said that such mistakes are *necessary* evils, and that the people are blameless, since they *intend* to believe as the church believes, and only err from want of information, that is confessing that the people do not absolutely need *infallible* guidance, and that no more is required of them than to do their best; which, after all, is just what Protestants do.‡

\* *Tractatus de Ecclesiâ*, p. 393. Dublin, 1815.

† Vasquez. *Theol. iii. Disput. 108, Art. 3, c. 9.* See, on the other side, Bellarmine *de Imag. L. ii. c. 24.*

‡ There occurs, in a late number of the *Edinburgh Review*, (April, 1850,) a remark which one may find also in the mouths of many, and in the minds of very many more; that the great diversity of religious opinions prevailing in the world,



Since God, then, has not given us such direction as this craving after infallibility demands, those who hold that such guidance is absolutely necessary, will be driven—if they follow out their principles—into infidelity, and even into atheism.

They will be driven to deny the truth of the Christian religion, when they see that Christ has not provided for his church any such infallible interpreter, as they think necessary to a Divine Revelation. And then, when they see that neither in natural religion, nor in the affairs of life, has God given men such certainty as they think he *ought* to have afforded, they will be driven to deny the very existence of God.

Numbers there are, however, no doubt, who do not follow out such principles to their consequences; many, from habitual want of reflection, and the absence of mental cultivation; and others from resolutely abstaining from all reasoning and all investigation, because they have determined to be believers, and consider their faith to be both the more praiseworthy, and also the more secure, the less they reflect and examine. *They* dread the very danger just mentioned,—that reasoning will lead to infidelity; and they seek to avoid this danger, not by discarding the false principle from which that reasoning sets out, but by shunning all reasoning, and stifling all inquiry and reflection.

But this freedom from all uneasy doubt,—a desire for which creates that craving for infallibility,—this, after all, is not always attained by such a procedure. A lurking suspicion will often remain—which a man vainly endeavours to stifle—that the *foundation* is not sound. The building, indeed, may be complete. Once granted that the church, sect, party, or leader, we have taken

and the absence of all superhuman provision against them, is a proof that it is the *will* of the Almighty that such should be the case; that men were *designed* to hold all diversities of religious belief. Now, the inference which will naturally be drawn, on further reflection, from this is, that it is no matter whether we hold truth or falsehood; and next, that there is *no* truth at all in *any* religion.

But this is not all. The same reasoning would go to prove, that since there is no infallible and universally accessible guide in *morals*, and men greatly differ in their judgments of what is morally right and wrong, hence we are to infer that God did not design men to agree on this point neither, and that it matters not whether we *act* on right or wrong principles; and, in short, that there is no such thing as right and wrong; but only what each man thinks. The two opposite errors (as I think them) from the *same source*, are, If God wills all men to believe and to act rightly, he must have given us an infallible and accessible guide for belief and practice. (1.) But he does so will; therefore, there is such a guide: and (2.) He has *not* given us any such guide; therefore, he does not will all men to believe and act rightly.

Now this is to confound the two senses of WILL, as distinguished in the concluding paragraph of the 17th Article. In a certain sense, the most absurd errors and the most heinous crimes may be said to be according to the Divine will, since God does not interpose his omnipotence to prevent them. But “in our doings,” says that Article, “that will of God is to be followed which we have *expressly* declared in Holy Writ.”



as our guide is perfectly infallible, and there is an end of all doubts and cares respecting particular points. But an uneasy doubt will sometimes haunt a man,—in spite of his efforts to repress it, and however strenuously he may deny, even to himself, its existence,—whether the infallibility claimed, which is the foundation of the whole building, be itself really well established. A suspicion will occasionally cross the mind, however strenuously repelled, “IS THERE NOT A LIE IN MY RIGHT HAND?” And the reluctance often shown to examine the foundation, and ascertain whether it is really sound, is an indication, not of full confidence in its firmness, but of a lurking suspicion that it will not bear examining.

As for those who do *not* allege the *necessity* of an infallible guide as a reason for believing that there is one, but who ground their belief in the church’s infallibility upon what seems to them the meaning of Scripture, or the evidence of tradition, we may consider their arguments hereafter. But, in the meanwhile, *they* would do well to consider what follows.

A ship was about to sail for a certain harbour without the captain who had been usually the commander, but who was then called to serve elsewhere. He came on board to take leave, and to warn the officers and others of the dangerous rocks and shoals which, to his knowledge, beset the entrance—exhorting them to keep a good look-out, and also to inquire carefully into the character of any *pilot* who might offer his services; as some, he was certain, were in league with *wreckers*, and would purposely steer the ship on rocks, that these wretches might plunder the wreck. And if we were told that all this time there was, *to his knowledge*, a *lighthouse* erected there as a sure landmark; and a ship *could* not go wrong, that did but steer straight for that; should we not at once exclaim that, since *he said not a word* of this, he must either be a fool or a knave? And, on being assured that he was an eminently wise and good man, and thoroughly well-informed, we should say,—“Then this story of the lighthouse must be a fiction.”

And now look at Paul’s farewell (Acts xx. 29–31) to the elders at Miletus.

Does he promise them that the *primitive* church shall be safe from the danger of being misled?—that no inroads of error will take place for the first three or four centuries? On the contrary, he speaks of the danger as immediate.

Or does he tell them that they will find their safety in apostolical succession?—that it is miraculously provided that no teacher shall ever mislead them, who has but been regularly ordained by himself, or by those appointed by him to succeed him in the office of ordaining? On the contrary, he warns the elders that even from the midst of their own body—of their own selves—will arise



men teaching a perverted gospel to draw away the disciples after them.

Or again, does he tell them that when any point of doubt and difficulty arises, they are to find safety in making a reference to Peter, and to those who shall be divinely appointed from time to time as his successors and representatives, for infallible decisions and directions? Not a word is said of any apostle but himself; or of any one who should succeed him in the apostolic office. To himself, during his life, they would naturally apply by letter, if opportunity offered, for directions in any case of doubt that might arise. But not even any apostle—much less any successor of an apostle—is mentioned by Paul as the oracular guide, whom, after his own death, they were to consult.

Or does he bid them resort to some central church—whether at Jerusalem, or at Rome, or at Byzantium—and seek there for infallible guidance?

Or does he direct them to summon a general council, and refer every question that may arise to the decision of a majority of its votes, with a full assurance that these should be so supernaturally overruled by the Holy Spirit as to secure them from the possibility of error?

No: he makes no allusion whatever to any other church or prelate; to any successor of Peter, or of the other apostles; or to any infallible council as their guide. But he tells them to TAKE HEED TO THEMSELVES and to the flock they are set over; he tells them to “*watch* ;” and he exhorts them to remember his own earnest warnings to them.

Now, if there *had* been provided by the Most High any such safeguard as we have alluded to,—if Paul had known of any order of men, any prelate, any particular church, or general council, designed by Providence as an infallible guide, and a sure remedy against errors and corruptions, would he not have been sure, on such an occasion as this, to have given notice of it to his hearers? If, when he foresaw a perilous navigation for the vessel of the church, he had known of a safe port, just at hand, and readily accessible, is it credible that he would have never alluded to it, but have left them exposed to the storms? Would he have been, in that case, “*pure*”—as he declares he was—“from the blood of all men?” Can any one seriously think, that, against the dangers which he had been warning them of, and weeping over, for three years, he knew of a complete safeguard, and yet was so wanting in his duty—so careless of their well-being—as never to make the slightest mention of any thing of the kind? To suppose this would be to suppose him destitute not only of all faithfulness in his high office, but of common prudence and rationality.

And yet if any such provision really had been made by the Au-



thor of our faith, it is utterly inconceivable that the Apostle Paul should have been—and that, too, on such an occasion as this—left in utter ignorance of its existence. Whatever may be the precise meaning of our Lord's promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," it is at least perfectly clear what it could *not* mean: it could not relate to something either unknown to Paul, or kept back by him from his hearers. All that he knew, and that it was for their benefit to learn, he had, as he solemnly declares, taught to them; and this was no less, he assures them, than "the whole counsel and design of God." "I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

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## No. VII.

HERE is a fresh bundle of Roman Catholic Tracts, a continuation of those noticed in Caution IV., and it may not be amiss to give you some account of them. To us they appear extremely important; not as containing *strong arguments*,—very much the reverse,—but as the *best* that can be urged by the *ablest* of their writers.

Only, before we begin, let us beg of you not to be offended at seeing some rather silly things put in their true light, as if sacred matters were laughed at, when some folly that has been *forced into connection* with them is exposed. When things really ridiculous are mixed up with religion, who is to be blamed? Not he who shows that they *are* ridiculous, and no parts of religion, but those who disfigure truth by blending falsehood with it. It is true, indeed, that to attack even error in religion with *mere* ridicule is no wise act, because good things may be ridiculed as well as bad. But it surely cannot be our duty to abstain from showing plainly that absurd things *are* absurd, merely because people cannot help smiling at them. A tree is not injured by being cleared of moss



and lichens, nor truth by having folly or sophistry torn away from around it.

Some well-meaning people, however, are scandalized even at a *familiar illustration*, when used on religious subjects. They cannot understand a comparison between two *cases* but as a comparison between the *things* spoken of. Such persons would do well to reflect upon our Lord's parables, in which the most familiar objects are taken to furnish a comparison with sacred matters. Yet he, surely, did not mean that Christians are literally *like* fishes, and fig-trees, and sheep, and goats, &c. Such parables, if met with as *new*, and by an unknown author, would, very likely, be called *profane* by many. But those who censured them would be labouring under a confusion of thought. And the truth is, that many persons can hardly be made to understand the weakness or force of an argument, but by applying it to some *familiar case* in common life, and showing them how that case resembles something in religion.

Let us then, without further preface, turn to this "entertaining and instructive library" of Roman Catholic pamphlets. "Old Stones tell Tales," is a pleasant dialogue between Thomas the carpenter, who is a Protestant, and (of course) very ignorant, and John the Mason, who is a Roman Catholic, and (of course) intelligent and well-informed.

The dialogue shows very well how easily a simple ignorant man may be imposed upon and misled by a clever one. *That* was not, indeed, what the writer *meant* to show; but you will find that it is the real upshot of the matter.

Thomas and John are talking about the old church of St. Mary, Redcliffe, at Bristol. The carpenter (poor man!) had fancied that our forefathers were always Protestants; and he is much struck with the information that they were Roman Catholics at first, and that it was a Roman Catholic mayor of Bristol who built that fine old church.

Just so, the ignorant Roman peasants fancy that their forefathers were always subject to the popes, and that the Pantheon, and the Coliseum, and many other splendid old buildings, were erected by Christians; and if they were told that those noble edifices were raised by their pagan ancestors, and that the Christians took possession of them, and often rose in disorderly mobs to pull down the beautiful statues, and break them in pieces, *they*, too, would probably be much surprised. And they would very likely wonder (further) why the idols should have been broken, when they might have been turned so easily into saints.

However, Thomas forthwith begins to think that these Roman Catholics (since they were our ancestors, and built such fine churches) must have been a good sort of people; but he is puzzled at remem-



bering that some persons have told him that the monks were idle drones, who deserved to have their convents pulled down. Idle *Protestant* drones, he must mean, since he thought that all our forefathers were Protestants; but now he is taught better; for John informs him that, though the people had few books then, yet the monks and clergy exerted themselves so well, that *all* “men, women, and children, *knew their religion*, and there was no dispute about it as there is now.”

Such a statement as this might be excused in a mason; but the author of this tract is no mason.

Of *what* times, do you think, is this gentleman speaking? Of the times of the barons' wars—of the times when Jack Straw and Wat Tyler led a savage *socialist* mob to London, swearing that they would kill any man who could write and read—of the times when men rode on such pilgrimages to Canterbury as Chaucer has described—the times when that monster of iniquity, Alexander VI., was Bishop of Rome—the times of the great schism of the West—the times which every pious and enlightened Roman Catholic looks back upon with sorrow, and remembers with shame. Listen how the famous Roman Catholic bishop, Bossuet, describes the happy times before the Reformation, when all *men knew their religion*:—

“A Reformation of ecclesiastical discipline had been desired several ages since. ‘Who will grant me,’ says St. Bernard, ‘before I die, to see the Church of God such as she had been in the primitive times?’ . . . Disorders had still increased since his time. The Roman Church . . . was not exempt from the evil; and, from the time of the Council of Vienne, a great prelate, commissioned by the Pope to prepare matters there to be discussed, laid it down as a groundwork to that holy assembly, ‘to reform the church in the HEAD and the MEMBERS.’ . . . The disorders of the clergy, chiefly those of Germany, were represented in this manner to Eugenius IV. by Cardinal Julian. ‘These disorders excite the hatred of the people against the whole ecclesiastical order, and should they not be corrected, it is to be feared lest the laity, like the Hussites, should rise against the clergy, as they loudly threaten us. . . . When they shall no longer have any hopes of our amendment,’ continued this great cardinal, ‘then will they fall upon us. . . . The rancour they have imbibed against us becomes manifest; they will soon think it an agreeable sacrifice to God to abuse and rob ecclesiastics, *as abandoned to extreme disorders, and hateful to God and man.*’”—*History of Variations*, b. i., c. 1.

This is pretty strong; but we might have cited even stronger testimonies. “The Church of God,” says Bernard, “every day finds by sad experience in what danger she is, *when the Shepherd knows not where the pastures are, nor the guide where the right way is*, and when that very man who should speak for God, and on his



side, is ignorant what is the will of his master." Nicholas de Clemangis, another Roman Catholic writer of those times, speaks thus: "The church that Jesus Christ has chosen for his spouse without spot and blemish, is in these days a warehouse of ambition and business, of theft and rapine. The sacraments and all orders, even to those of the priests, are exposed to sale. They sell pardons of sins, masses, and the very administration of our Lord's body." And further, he declares, that "the study of the Holy Scriptures, and those who taught them, were generally derided," and that the "bishops themselves were the foremost to scoff at them."

If all the people, men, women, and children, in those days, *knew their religion*, it must have been a curious religion which they knew.

"Well, but at any rate there were no disputes then about religion as there are now, since the Reformation has brought sects and heresies into the church."

On the contrary, there never was such a swarm of sects in the world as then prevailed. Not to speak of Wycliffe, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and the Waldenses, who were endeavouring to reform the church, there were strange sects and heresies without end, such as have scarce ever been heard of since the Reformation—so wild in their opinions, and so abominable in their practice. There were Manicheans, and Fratricelli, and Turlupins, and Brethren of the Free Spirit, and Apostolicals, and myriads more besides; and though the Church of Rome bestirred itself to the utmost to put down these sects by fire and sword, massacring them often by thousands at a time, yet it could never wholly root them out; because the ignorance of the people left them open to be imposed upon by crafty and fanatical teachers.

Let not Roman Catholics then pretend that it is the reading of the Scriptures that has brought in wild and extravagant sects among us; they had a thousand times wilder sects among themselves long before the Reformation; and though we have many differences among us, yet our old extravagant sects have either soon become quiet and rational, or else quite disappeared; and the new ones do not, generally, rely on *Scripture* at all, but (like the Southcotians and Mormonites) on *new Revelations*. Now, as for new Revelations, the church which sanctions the Revelations of St. Brigit, and St. Simon Stock, and St. Catharine, has no right to laugh at Protestants as enthusiasts when they talk of such things.

Bear ever in mind, then, that the system of the Romish Church is an *experiment that has been tried, and that has failed*. That system was in full work for five centuries before the Reformation, and the result was, that things were going on every day from bad to worse, till at last, by the confession of Romanists themselves, a general corruption spread itself over the whole body of the church,



“both in the head and in the members.” Do not be deceived, then, by the plausible appearance which that system may wear *among you* at present. Every adroit aimer at despotism, spiritual or civil, *begins* mildly, and does not use the whip and spur till he is firm in the saddle, and has the bit in the horse’s mouth. The first converts to Romanism will be treated gently,—their scruples will be respected, and “things will be made easy to them.” The first nunneries will perhaps be made real good schools, and charitable institutions. The first teachers will be really learned men, and will teach—only, on *human* authority—much that we believe on divine. The first confessors will say nothing but what is proper, and will give wholesome advice. But let England be once wholly Roman Catholic, and that church’s authority well established—and then the cloven-foot will appear. Your case will be like that of Sinbad the Sailor, who let a meek-looking, venerable old man get upon his shoulders, and then found that it was not easy to shake him off. An iron tyranny will be fixed upon your consciences; the nunneries will become, as they were before the Reformation, full of abominations; your teachers will be ignorant and debauched priests; the confessional will be abused to the vile purposes of sedition and impurity; and England will need a second Reformation to lift the heavy burden from its neck.

You see, then, that honest “John the mason” went beyond his rule when he told the poor Protestant joiner that every one “knew his religion” before the Reformation, and that there were “no disputes” in those happy times. The carpenter should have remembered that, in dealing with Roman Catholic convertists, he was *meddling with edge-tools*, and have been more on his guard than he seems to have been.

However, Thomas rallies at last, and (to do him justice) puts one shrewd question:—How came it that these people, who knew their religion so well, and were so happy in it, allowed it to be changed? And John replies, that the king at first promised to make the church-lands serve instead of taxes; and the hope of being freed from taxes had such charms for Englishmen, that they gave up their churches and monasteries for that.

Now, is not this a fine flattering picture of our Roman Catholic forefathers? They “knew their religion,” every man, woman, and child of them; so that they could not plead ignorance (like silly Protestants) in excuse. “Rich and poor went together to the same church on Sundays and holidays, and every one went to communion,” (being, indeed, *forced* to do so, as John might have added, at least once a year,) and yet they were content to give up their fine churches and monasteries to be eased of taxes, not one quarter as heavy as those we bear now! And they only began to show discontent when they found that the king did not stand to his bar-



gain! Why, the very heathens would scorn such baseness as that.

John, indeed, himself seems to feel that this account of the matter is not quite satisfactory, and therefore he adds, that heretical teachers had got among the people, (well-instructed as they had been,) and told them that "every man had a right to judge for himself in matters of religion. *And so they went on from lesser things to greater; and many lost their respect for the old faith;*"—a natural consequence, it seems, of judging for oneself in matters of religion.

Now, if some of John's acquaintance were to say, by way of recommending him, that those of his friends who believed most firmly in his honesty believed it on his own word, while those who had ventured to judge for themselves of his character *had come to the conclusion that he was a rogue*,—do you think he would be very grateful for such "backing" as that?

Yet poor Thomas (simple soul!) is perfectly satisfied with this explanation. Nor does it occur to him to ask—"If people have no right to judge for themselves in matters of religion, what business have you arguing with me against Protestantism, or I in listening to you?" Indeed, there is not *much* judgment shown on either side in the argument; but yet there is *some*.

Still Thomas has a trifling difficulty left. He cannot understand why the Reformers should have knocked down the images, and taken away the altars, if there was no harm in them. But here, too, John is ready with an explanation, and, in the main, a very good one.

The *altars* were taken away because Protestants did not pretend to offer up Christ's body and blood as a *sacrifice* for sins. And the *images* were broken because they thought them *idols*. Only, as they were images of holy things and persons, Thomas thinks that, however abused they might have been, the Reformers should not have *broken* them;—so that it was wrong, it seems, in Hezekiah, to break the brazen serpent, and call it, contemptuously, a "piece of brass." (2 Kings xviii. 4.) He ought to have "taken it quietly away."

Thereupon the mason grows pathetic over the fall of images and the wreck of rood-lofts, and deplores the sad condition of our churches, left as cold and bare as "the inside of a union work-house;" or (he might have added) as the rooms in which the apostles and early Christians assembled. And he thinks it quite natural that people should leave off going to places that have so little "ornament and sculpture" to "warm the heart."

And, to be sure, it must be granted that, to one who loves brave sights, and cannot "warm his heart" without them, the best of our churches is nothing in comparison with a fine Roman Catholic Ca-



thedral, with its candles, and incense, and cloth-of-gold, and images and processions. High mass may be made almost a grander spectacle than any you ever saw in a play-house.

But Thomas ventures to suggest that there may have been "gospel-teaching" in those cold, bare churches; at which John seems to become much excited, as if the very phrase stung him to the quick.

He is indignant at supposing that there could have been any *teaching* at all, when "every man read the Bible for himself, and had his own opinion about it,"—like the ignorant Bereans, who would not be satisfied to be *taught* by Paul, but "searched the Scriptures daily to see if those things [which he alleged] were so." And he thinks that no Protestant can "tell you a simple truth in simple words, such as a plain man can understand," their teaching consisting chiefly in "a score or two of texts,"—such as these:

"The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present world; looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 11–14.)

"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." (1 Tim. v. 3.)

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. vi. 10.)

"This is my commandment, That ye should love one another, as I have loved you." (John xii. 13.)

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Coloss. iii. 13.)

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; bless them which persecute you; bless and curse not." (Rom. xii. 9–14.)

Are not these "simple truths in simple words, such as a plain man can understand?" or can the Church of Rome tell them better and more intelligibly? If she can, it is no wonder that she does not put the Scriptures into men's hands, when she can teach so much more clearly in her own way. But then John should have spoken out, and said that neither Protestants, *nor the apostles and evangelists* could tell a simple truth in simple words; and then no one could have mistaken his right meaning.

But another reason why we of the Established Church cannot *teach*



religion is, because we are not all agreed upon some points respecting faith and baptism. But did John really suppose that all the teachers of his own church are quite agreed about all things relating to faith and the sacraments? If he did, he was greatly mistaken, and “knew his religion” but imperfectly after all. There are great disputes among their most learned theologians about what they call “divine faith,” and the proper way of “resolving” it. And, as for the sacraments, there is no end of their differences about them;—what is the true meaning of “opus operatum;”—how the sacraments “contain grace;”—what sort of “character” they imprint upon the receiver;—what dispositions are impediments to their working;—what sort of intention is required in the minister, &c.

You will say, perhaps, “these are not *practical* questions.” On the contrary, some of them are of great practical importance. For example, it is of great moment for a man to know exactly what sort of repentance is *necessary* to obtain the pardon of his sins; and yet this is one of the points on which the Romish divines are not agreed.

Then, is it not a *practical* question, whether the efficacy of the sacraments depends on the real inward *intention* of the minister? For, if it does, (as some of their greatest divines maintain,) how can a Roman Catholic be sure, when he worships the host, that he is not worshipping a mere bit of bread; since the priest may not have *intended* to consecrate it? Or how can he know that he was really baptized? or that the Pope himself is a true priest,—or so much as a baptized Christian? Yet this, too, is a question on which the ablest and most learned Roman Catholic theologians are not agreed.

On the other hand, though we are not all agreed about the meaning of the word “faith,” in certain texts, (some taking it for “trust,” some for “fidelity,” some for “sincere belief,” some for “belief with its proper effects,” &c.,) yet we are all agreed that all these things are necessary to salvation; that a man cannot be saved except he *trust* in Christ, and have a *sincere belief* in the gospel, *producing the fruits of righteousness*.

And, though we are not all agreed what baptismal regeneration means in the case of an infant, yet we all agree to baptize children; and, as for grown-up persons, (which is the practical point to us,) we have no doubt but that they cannot enjoy the benefits promised in baptism without faith and repentance. There are really *fewer* practical differences among us than among them.

Well! Next we have a lively description of the irreverent behaviour of some of our congregations; which behaviour is, indeed, very much to be lamented. But if John had ever gone abroad, and seen some of the congregations in some Roman Catholic



churches on the Continent, he would not have been so forward to laugh at us. Those who live in glass-houses should not throw stones.

Meanwhile, let us just remark, that an appearance of great devotion in saying prayers is no proof that the persons who seem so *devout* are truly *religious*. The robbers and loose women in Italy are known to be very *devout* in their own way. So was Louis XI. in France, and our Harry VIII., and many others; and, surely, nothing can exceed the *devotion* of those who fling themselves to be crushed under the car of Juggernaut.

But careless and superstitious persons may be found everywhere. The true question is, whether the carelessness of some Protestants *springs from their religion* or from neglect of it? John's account of the matter is, that "every thing about the Established Church is so formal, so sober, so decent, so respectable. It would look so odd to seem in earnest, to be on your knees in prayer *before so many well-dressed people*." From which one may gather, that we shall never get on well till we turn all well-dressed people out of our churches. Otherwise, we shall feel ashamed to "kneel down" in their presence, while *kneeling* is quite essential to devotion; though the poor ignorant primitive Christians never *kneelt down* in church on a Sunday,\* and some even thought it a matter of great importance to pray *standing* on the Lord's day, as a token that we are now *justified*, and freed from slavish dread, by Christ's resurrection.

But John's fury is not spent yet. Protestants, it seems, are always bragging of their fine old churches, which were really built by Roman Catholics. They are like the sparrow who stole into the martin's nest, and said, "See what a nice warm house I have got," &c.

Just so, no doubt, the pagans felt toward the Christians, when these got possession of the heathen temples and court-houses, and turned them into churches. Just so the Canaanites felt toward the Jews, when God gave his people "houses which *they built not*, and wells which *they digged not*, and olives and vines *which they planted not*."

But, after all, was it not "our forefathers" who built these churches? Are not we the same English people still? If we were Roman Catholics when we built those churches for ourselves to worship in, is that any reason why we should not use them now that we are Protestants? Our ancestors built castles in old times, when they used to fight with each other; therefore you should be ashamed to live in them during a time of peace. Give them up to

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\* "We deem it impious to fast on the Lord's day, or *pray kneeling*." (Tertulian. *De Coronâ Militis*. c. 3.)—"The church instructs her nurslings to make their prayers *standing* on the Lord's day." (Basil. *de Spiritu Sancto*, c. 27.)



brave fellows who are ready to cut each other's throats, or else turn robber and land-pirate yourself! Don't you see how ill those old castles *fit* you? Don't you blush to see your father's sword rusting on the wall, and the empty embrasures and loop-holes, where there used to be cannon and cross-bows in the "good old times?"

Thus John goes on to tell how *he* was converted by finding that the old churches were built by Roman Catholics, and that there were a thousand things in them that *we* turn to no use. He thought it a *pity* that there should be altars without sacrifices, and niches without images, &c., and, therefore, he chose the only religion which could *furnish the old house properly*.

He began to ask, in short, like the Israelites in Canaan, "how the people of the land had served their gods," and resolved himself "to do thereafter."

Among other things, John was greatly struck with the old tombs, because they showed that the people had *Christian* notions of the soul's being in purgatory after death, and needing the prayers of the faithful; while he chanced to find a Protestant monument with a *heathenish* figure weeping over *an urn*, and a fulsome inscription about the virtues of the fine lady buried in it.

Pity that John, with all his book-learning, never discovered that the heathens knew quite as much about *purgatory* as his friends do! Pity that he had never seen the *heathenish* tombs and urns in St. Peter's Church at Rome, or the following inscription upon Pope Alexander VI., who was killed by accidentally drinking the poison he had mixed for others:—

"I give thee hearty thanks, O Death!—Death, the stern punisher of human pride!—that thou hast delivered me from the terrors of the threatening Orcus [which is the pagan name of hell] having overtaken me *living well*. Thou art not evil, but like Mercury [a heathen god] in the stars, and like a chameleon on earth. Thou art black to the dark, and clear to the bright."

What would John have said if he had found such profane nonsense in a Protestant church? Yet there it was, as we are told, in the sacristy of St. Peter's Church, at Rome, in the year 1836.

The end of the matter is, that Thomas is quite satisfied that Roman Catholics at least "know something for certain about God;" which seems to him all the same as *their being certain* that they know their religion. He sees that they are *confident*, and from that he concludes that they must be *right*. But if Thomas had ever called in, at the same time, a quack and a regular physician in a difficult case, he would have found the quack boasting much more of *certainty*, pretending to *know* much more about the disease, and promising a cure much more *confidently*, than the regular physician. Yet which would a reasonable man choose to employ?



And as for professing to “know a great deal about the other world,” the Swedenborgians beat us all out hollow. We Protestants pretend to no more knowledge than the little that God has told us. The Pope boasts of some more. He can tell you about purgatory, and limbus patrum, and a great many other curious places, some of which (according to him) you are likely enough to visit one of these days yourself, and out of which you will not easily get, unless you pay the priests to pray for you. But the Swedenborgians can tell more again than he; and (what is more) they can *show* you the other world now, and that, too, without charging a single penny for the exhibition. If, therefore, you are very curious about such things, and long to be “told about them,” without caring much whether what you are told be true or false, by all means turn Swedenborgian without delay.

Then, as for the argument that there *must be* a purgatory *because very few* can be fit, let them “die ever so well,” to go straight to heaven, and see God—surely this gentleman must know that, according to the best Roman Catholic divines, the souls in purgatory are not *made better* and more holy there, but only quit the score of *punishment* which they have not yet paid in this life—as we have remarked already in Caution V., Part I. So that, according to that view of the matter, a man will not go to purgatory, but to a worse place, unless he has enough of inward holiness “to go straight to heaven, and see God.”

Indeed, if the pains of purgatory are *needful* to make men *fit* for heaven, why does the Pope give such indulgences as the following—which he gave the other day to a gentleman at Rome?—

“A. B., casting himself humbly at the feet of your Holiness, seeks a plenary indulgence in the moment of death, to be obtained by himself, *by his kin to the fourth degree*, as also *twenty other persons*, to be named in the petition.”

To which the Pope subscribed thus:—

“We assent to the petition,

“PIUS IX., Chief Pontiff,

23 March, 1851.”\*

Now, then, does the Pope send men to heaven before they are *fit* to go there? Or can *he* make them fit to go “straight to heaven,” without suffering the pains of purgatory? If so, may not God Almighty do as much as the Pope?

Then, as for the profitableness of prayers for the dead, the text

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\* Humillime provolutus ante pedes Sanctitatis Tuæ, petit A. B. indulgentiam plenariam in Articulo Mortis, lucranda a se et a suis consanguineis usque ad quartam gradum, necnon pro viginti aliis personis, a petitione nominandis

*Annuimus juxta petita,*

PIUS NONUS, P. M.,

23 Martii, 1851.



which John quotes is not out of the Bible, but out of the Apocryphal Second Book of Maccabees; and that text speaks of prayers for persons who had died in the *mortal sin* of idolatry, while the Church of Rome teaches that our prayers cannot profit those who die in *mortal sin*!

Yet with this passage out of a foolish old Jewish book, which says not one word of purgatory, and praises as “profitable” prayers which they think *unprofitable*, they try to persuade people to leave money for masses to get their souls out of purgatory; and, thanks to men’s superstitious hopes and fears, they succeed. But how many of the masses paid for are *really said* is another question.

It is well known, for example, that, in 1723, Pope Innocent XIII., by a single letter, exempted a vast number of friars from the obligation of saying continual daily masses for certain souls in purgatory, which they had *omitted* till the arrear became enormous; and allowed them to say instead one grand annual mass, retaining all the while the money which had been paid for the perpetual masses; and, for the rest, he allowed them to take the present market-price of masses as the measure of their obligations. So that the poor souls who had made a good bargain, and bought one hundred perpetual masses when they were cheap, thinking the contract was always to stand good, received only fifty when the market-price was doubled!\*

It would seem, then, that the pains of purgatory are not *absolutely necessary* either for satisfying the Divine justice, or for improving the souls of the departed, but only for bringing in money to the church; and that the Pope, with a stroke of his pen, can do a great deal toward sending one “straight to heaven,” much more than could be accomplished by “*dying* ever so well,” which is the chief thing John seems to think of. The “*living* ever so well” is surely of somewhat more importance.

But the great charm which the doctrine of purgatory has for many is the hope of being able to make up for a careless life by suffering there—especially as they think that the pains of it may be lightened greatly by the prayers of their friends, and of those whose services they can hire for that purpose. If it had not this ground in corrupt human nature, the texts and flimsy reasons that are brought in support of it would influence very few.

Next we have a tract upon the “Smithfield fires,” the object of which is to allay our apprehensions of being roasted alive, if the Roman Catholics should get the upper hand.

Now, observe how this gentleman proceeds. He plainly feels that he has an important point to manage, and is very anxious to

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\* De Potter *Histoire du Christianisme*, vol. v. p. 297.



free us from our fears ; yet he never ventures on the most obvious and effectual way of encouraging us.

Suppose a Socinian were to express apprehensions of being burned alive by our bishops, on the ground that persons of his sentiments were so punished by orthodox Protestants in former times, how would *you* answer him? You would say: "I confess that, in former times, our church, or at least the chief governors of it, were foolish and wicked enough to do such things ; but, thank God ! we are wiser now. We detest and renounce the principles and practice of persecution ; and, therefore, you need not fear that you will ever be exposed to danger of bodily pain from us on account of your religious sentiments."

That is the way in which a plain straightforward English Protestant would meet such fears and suspicions. It is what I hope you would be ready to say, even in reference to those who are not themselves tolerant.

But that is *not* the way in which this gentleman ventures to meet these suspicions. He never once says that the *principle* of persecuting heretics is wrong. He never once says that the practice of burning men for heresy is, *under all circumstances*, a wicked practice. All he tries to show is, that the queen and the pope's legate, and most of the bishops, were, partly from natural humanity, and partly (mark this !) from *motives of policy*, unwilling to go so soon to extremities, but were forced on, against their wills, by violent men in the council and parliament.

Cardinal Pole, the pope's legate, it seems, declared that "there was a great difference to be made between a nation uninfected, where some few teachers came over to spread errors, [in which case, it would appear, he thought burning the teachers a very proper remedy,\*] and a nation that had been overrun with them, both clergy and laity." He had "seen that severe proceedings did rather inflame than cure the disease." He advised that "the statutes against heresy should be held forth *as a terror* only ; but that *no open persecution* should be raised." And this alone, the writer thinks, "ought to convince any reasonable person that [Roman] Catholics are not *bound*, by the very principles of their

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\* Cardinal Wiseman should think well of this. And the writers and readers of these tracts should consider how Pope Gregory XVI. has denounced that liberty of the press of which they avail themselves. He calls it, in his famous encyclical letter, that "baneful, detestable, and never-to-be-sufficiently-execrated liberty of the book-trade ;" and he speaks with horror of the "multitudes of books, pamphlets, and all sorts of publications, *small of size but of immense malice*," which are the result of that liberty. But though these men, on *their own principles*, deserve to be punished and restrained by Protestants, we should not be so weak and wicked as to adopt their unchristian principle of persecution in our conduct toward them. "Use every man after his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity. The less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty."



religion, to *exterminate* the enemies of the faith." Not bound under *all circumstances*, he probably means.

Now, perhaps, it may show *that*; but what more does it *show*? Does it show that they are not *bound* to persecute so far as they may think persecution prudent, and effectual for their purposes? Plainly not. Listen how another cardinal, Bellarmine—a divine of the highest character in the Church of Rome—explains this matter:—"We shall briefly show that incorrigible heretics, especially such as have relapsed, may and *ought* to be rejected by the church, and punished by the secular power with temporal penalties, and even death itself." He then goes on to prove this position from Scripture, the Fathers, the laws of Church and State, and experience; and, finally, he qualifies his position thus: "We should always consider, according to our Lord's advice, (in the case of heretics, as in that of thieves and other malefactors,) whether the punishment may be inflicted on the evil without injury to the good. If that may be done, *heretics should by all means be exterminated*. If not—either because they are not known—or there is hazard of punishing the innocent for the guilty—or *because they are stronger than we, and there is danger that, in case of war, we should suffer the greater loss*, then we ought to keep quiet."\*

On such principles, what would be the security of Protestants to-morrow, if the Pope were to gain supreme power in England? Plainly none, but in the fears and prudence of the Roman Catholics. The question would be, as it was (by this author's showing) in Queen Mary's days, a question of *time* and *policy*, between the violent men and the moderate; and, even as to literal extermination, who is to assure us that the violent counsellors might not (as they did then) carry all their own way?

They *might*, however, be overborne. Pole's advice was, no doubt, the *wisest*. The "fires of Smithfield" disgusted the whole nation, and the martyrs (as Latimer promised) "*lit such a candle in England, as, by the grace of God, shall never be put out.*"

But then, Englishmen have no taste for living on mere sufferance, and being exposed to every kind of persecution short of death. The light of the fires in Smithfield was strong enough to enable us to read the *small print* as well as the *large* of persecution. We can see by them what that principle really is; and that, if persecutors stop short of extermination, it is not because their principles do not justify it, but because circumstances will not allow them to go so far. We have no taste for having "statutes against heresy held over us as a terror;" we do not like the prospect of the "milder correction" which Bonner and Gardiner would have preferred to capital punishment; we cannot please ourselves with the

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\* *De Membris Eccl. Milit.*, lib. iii. c. 21.



expectation of "being often remanded" in hopes of a *recantation*; and would rather be roasted whole at once, than tortured and tempted to deny our faith by such lingering cruelties. And, if such wholesome and moderate severities as these are all this writer can promise us from the Pope, we tell him plainly, that we should greatly prefer the "fires in Smithfield," bad as they were, to the "tender mercies" of such a government as that of Rome, or Tuscany,\* or Naples, at the present day. Queen Mary's persecution was a hot fit; too fiery to last long; but the other, though not quite so fierce, is more durable, and keeps wearing away the patient by degrees, until it has made an end of him.

Now, certainly, there are many Roman Catholics who detest as heartily as we do the principle and practice of persecution. And what should be pressed upon them is, to consider how they can reconcile their love of liberty of conscience, with their submission to the Church of Rome. *We* make no scruple to confess that Protestants were wrong, when they persecuted those whom they considered heretics; for our opinions do not hinder us from owning our faults and correcting them. But *if they* grant that their popes, councils, and bishops were wrong in preaching up persecution for so many centuries, what becomes of that infallible guidance of which they boast?

Nor can they escape by saying that the heretics so punished were, for the most part, seditious or otherwise wicked people; since it was not *as seditious* persons, or as offenders against temporal good order, they were punished, but *as heretics*. Many of the English Protestants may have been rebels; but they were not burned for rebellion, but for *heresy*; and some of them might have had their lives spared, if they would have recanted their religious opinions. Nor could there have been much danger to the public peace from bedridden cripples, youths, women, and babes dropping from their mother's wombs, who were some of the persons burned in Queen Mary's persecution.

So that, on the whole, this author would have acted more wisely in not stirring "Smithfield Fires" again, since he has only burned his fingers in the flame.

Another Tract is on "the Benediction of the most Holy Sacrament;" and the design is to show that we are not justified in *disbelieving* Transubstantiation, merely because we cannot understand *how* it can be true. Perhaps so; but our difficulty is, that we cannot understand *why* we should be called on to believe it. To this ques-

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\* There were two Vaudois [Protestants of Piedmont] pastors, lately at Florence, who converted a considerable number of Roman Catholics. One of these pastors has been *driven away*; the other is either imprisoned somewhere, or else made away with. Of course, our (Roman Catholic) minister at Florence makes no remonstrance. But how would Cardinal Wiseman like us to play at *reprisals*?



tion the author only answers by quoting the text, "This is my body;" which has been considered already in No. III—John vi. 51, where Christ declares that he is "the living bread which came down from heaven;" and (verse 54) "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." But he (prudently) does *not* quote verses 62, 63, "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life;"—where our Lord plainly declares that he was *not speaking literally*, when he talked of eating his flesh, but figuratively. Nor does he remark that, elsewhere, in that chapter, "eating" is manifestly used in a figurative sense for "believing on" and "coming to;" as you may see from comparing verse 35—"I am the *bread of life*: he that *cometh to me* shall *never hunger*, and he that *believeth on me* shall *never thirst*"—with verses 47—50, "He that *believeth on me* hath *everlasting life*. I am *that bread of life*. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is that bread which came down from heaven, that a man may *eat thereof* and not *die*." And as for our Lord's not having *immediately* explained himself when the Jews murmured, one might just as well argue that he must have been speaking of literal water, John iv. 10, because, when the Samaritan woman mistook him, he did not immediately correct her mistake; or (for a like reason) that he really spoke of Herod's temple, when he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John ii. 19.

Next comes a Tract on the "Rosary;" the object of which is to show that *repeating* the Lord's Prayer *fifteen* times over, and the "Hail-Mary," *one hundred and fifty*,\* is no "vain repetition," because it is *possible* to do so with proper dispositions every time you repeat those words. Perhaps so; but is it easy? Why, the author tells you himself, "It is by no means an easy thing to *say the Rosary well*; but we may safely affirm, that any one who *can* do so, has little more to learn in the *science of devotion*." And, *therefore*, since the *common illiterate people* are great masters in the "science of devotion," the Rosary is just the thing for them!

Just consider how well these things hang together. And further, reflect that, for the special purpose of guarding against formal long prayers and vain repetitions, our Lord gave his own prayer (which is very short, and has *no repetitions* in it) to his disciples, as a model of ordinary devotion,—and then ask yourselves, would those disciples have been following their Master's advice, if they had *repeated that very prayer* every morning fifteen times over, and

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\* Does this mean that the Virgin Mary is entitled to just ten times as much veneration as her Maker?



added, besides, one hundred and fifty "Hail-Marys?" This may be safely left to your own common-sense.

As for the beads, *they*, it seems, are only a sort of plaything—"something to fiddle with," as children say—while repeating your prayers: just as some ill-reared boys have a trick of buttoning and unbuttoning their waistcoats when saying their lessons; and Locke tells of a gentleman who could not dance, unless a particular trunk lay in a corner of the room.

But if that be all, the old women might much better exercise themselves in "the science of devotion" while knitting stockings. The thing itself would be *useful*, which dropping the beads is not; and besides, be less apt to be superstitiously abused. They would not as readily think that counting stitches was a religious service, as they do that "telling beads" is praying.

Another Tract, "Protestantism weighed in its own Balance," seems, at first sight, to promise something like argument, and an appeal to Scripture; but a second glance disappoints all one's expectations.

The author makes a man of straw, and calls it Protestantism. He sets it up to show his valour on it, and knocks it down when he pleases. And, at last, when he is tired of the combat, he tramples on it furiously, and leaves it for dead. Meanwhile, however, Protestantism itself has received no hurt. It was only kicked and battered "in effigy;" and that effigy no more like the true thing than the "Guys" which the boys make on the 5th of November are like the real Guido Fawkes.

His argument is this: "You Protestants say that 'the Bible, and the Bible only, is your religion;'—that 'the Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation;'—that 'whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby,' should not be made an article of faith; and yet *you yourselves* believe *more* than the Bible teaches, since it never says that we are to receive nothing beyond its doctrine; and also *less*, since it speaks of the necessity of obeying *living infallible* guides, which you deny."

But this gentleman quite mistakes our meaning all along. When we speak of the "Bible only" as our "Rule of Faith," we do not mean to exclude all help from common sense and human reason, but only all other *pretended revelations*. Such truths and matters-of-fact as we can make out by reasoning and research, we are content to take, as proved by reason; but there are other things which could only be made known to us by *express revelation*; and for *such things* we take Scripture as our only rule of faith. And, as for matters of divine revelation, our principles are briefly these:—

We are so bold as to think it plain to common sense that men should not receive as a divine revelation what cannot be *proved* to be such.



We receive what Christ and his apostles taught, because we find that they *proved* their divine commission by miracles and the fulfilment of prophecies, &c.

We believe in the teaching of the Bible, because we find that the Bible can be *proved* to be a trustworthy record of what Christ and his apostles taught.

We do *not* receive the traditions of the Church of Rome, because we do *not* find that they are trustworthy records, and because we *do* find that they are repugnant to the teaching of Scripture.

We do *not* admit the infallibility of the Pope, because we do *not* find that he can prove his divine commission, and because we *do* find that he teaches things repugnant to Scripture.

Now, if this gentleman has any thing to say against these principles, let him say it. But let him not put words in our mouths which we never thought of, and then pretend that he has refuted *us*, when he has only refuted his own imaginations.\*

Now you will see that, on our real principles, it is not at all necessary for us to show that the Bible *commands* us, in so many words, to take it as our rule of faith, or *forbids* us, in so many words, to receive any thing beyond it. It is enough to say, that the Bible *commands* us to hold fast what the apostles taught—the faith “once for all delivered to the saints”—and declares every one to be accursed who shall teach “any other gospel.” If so, then we are clearly bound to receive nothing as the gospel beyond what the apostles taught, or different from it; and therefore we are bound not to receive what the Church of Rome teaches, except when *proved* to be the same as the apostles taught. In a word, it is the teaching of Christ and his apostles which is the rule of our faith; only *we know* of no certain *record* of that teaching except the Bible.

Then, as for the Bible commanding men to obey living infallible teachers, we do not want the Bible to inform us that there are no such teachers now in existence as are spoken of in those texts. We see plainly, with our own eyes, that there are now no such persons as the apostles were;—witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, who had *seen him* after he was raised from the dead—called to their office by the Lord himself—and proving their commission by the “signs of an apostle,”†—that is, “signs, and wonders, and mighty works.” And we see further, plainly, with our own eyes, that the popes of Rome, who claim to be infallible, teach things directly

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\* If any Roman Catholic is so ill-informed as to believe that the faith of Protestants is what that Tract represents it, let us hope that the true exposition of Protestant principles (and who can deny that it is so?) which has been here put before you, may induce him to reconsider the matter.

† 2 Cor. xii. 12: “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in much patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty works.”



opposite to the doctrine of the true apostles. And we see further, plainly, with our own eyes, in the Scripture, that the apostles, when writing (2 Pet. i. 13–15) and speaking (Acts xxi. 25–35) in the immediate prospect of death, and warning their disciples of the dangers to which they would be exposed, and showing them how to meet those dangers, said not one word of any *infallible successors* to themselves, but only exhorted Christians to watch and remember what had been *taught them*. Now this is precisely what we do, being ready to believe any thing which can be *proved* to have been taught by the apostles. Bank-notes and bills of exchange are received as having the requisite signatures. They do not say in words that nothing else is to be received. But the burden of proof is with him who presents a bill. Let him show the signature.

We do not then (as this gentleman pretends) attempt to *prove*, from the promises of infallible direction made to the apostles, that there were to be no infallible teachers after them. We only say those promises do *not prove* that there were to be, after the apostles died, any such infallible teachers; and that *other texts* show that there were *not*; and that, even if there were not such texts, it would remain still for any persons claiming infallible authority, to *prove* their authority, which they cannot do. This shows at once the absurdity of his citing such texts as John xx. 21, 22; John xvii. 18, 20; Luke x. 16. And the rest of those which he cites, pp. 7, 8, are just as little to the purpose.

For example,—Matthew xxviii. 20: “Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Does this prove that the apostles were to have infallible successors even to the end of the world? Cannot Christ be “with” his people, except he make them infallible? Christ promises elsewhere, that “wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in their midst.” (Matthew xviii. 20.) Did he, therefore, promise to make them infallible? Does this gentleman himself mean that any two or three Christians assembled in Christ’s name are infallible? He promises again: “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Is that promising to make every one who loves Christ *infallible*?

In a word, if this promise means that Christ will be “with” the successors of the apostles in *precisely the same way* as he was with the apostles themselves, then the popes and bishops of the Roman Catholic Church cannot be the successors of the apostles; for Christ is manifestly not with them as he was with the apostles—making them witnesses of his resurrection, and enabling them to speak with tongues and work miracles, and rendering each single bishop by himself infallible, as each single apostle was.

But if it only means that Christ will be *with* his church always,



so as to give Christians all the aid, outward and inward, which they really need, under various circumstances, for knowing his will and doing it; *that* is the meaning *we* put on the words, and are content to stand by—only, we cannot presume to say that we *absolutely require* infallible living guides, and, therefore, *must have them*.

Well, then he brings up Matthew xviii. 17, which he ought to have been ashamed to cite, and which has been considered already in No. II.

Then, 2 Tim. i. 13, 14, and ii. 2; to which we answer, that we *do* hold fast the teaching of the Apostle Paul so far as we know it; and we think it most important that the ministers of the church should be “faithful men,” and “able to teach others also;” since *we do not* expect that, whether good or bad, faithful or unfaithful, they will be *forced* (as Roman Catholics fancy of their wicked popes) to *teach aright*, however they may *believe* or *live*.

Then, 1 Cor. xi. 16; to which we answer, that the apostle does not propose the custom of the churches as a “test of truth,” but as, in things indifferent, a test of decency.

Then, 1 Ep. John iv. 1–6; to which we reply, that we do our best to “try the spirits” by comparing them with the doctrine of the apostles; and therefore reject the teachings of the Church of Rome, and its popes and councils, who pretend to *inspiration*, and yet do not conform to the apostle’s doctrine.

Then, 2 Thess. ii. 15, and 1 Cor. xi. 2; to which we reply, also, that we are ready to keep all traditions that *can be proved* to have been delivered down by the apostles as things to be observed in all ages.

And thus we have gone through all his texts, and are very well satisfied to have our Protestantism *weighed* in their balance; and so may make an end.

Only before we conclude, let us just remark that this gentleman should not be so positive that, if there be an infallible church, it *must be* the Church of Rome; since, if antiquity, and boasts, are to determine the matter, the Greek Church has somewhat better claims. For the Greek Church is the *older* of the two; Jerusalem being the Mother Church of all, and Antioch having been (it is said) the *See of Peter* before he went to Rome: while the Greeks boast at least quite as much of their church’s infallibility as the Roman Catholics of theirs.

And when you look back at all that has been said in these tracts by *one of their ablest* writers, and consider how very easily they are all refuted, you may well wonder how any one endowed with the gift of reason should be led to adopt their system.



## No. VIII.

WHEN one looks only at the *arguments* which Roman Catholics bring in support of their religion, it does, indeed, (as we remarked in the last Caution,) seem strange how any man of sense can be led to adopt their system. But the truth is, that it is not by arguments addressed directly to the reason that men are commonly drawn into that system at first, or retained in it afterward, but by skilfully working on their feelings and imaginations.

Indeed, we have known a Roman Catholic preacher declare openly, that men ought, in matters pertaining to religion, to give themselves up completely to the guidance of their feelings, and renounce all employment of their reason. This, he said, is the way to comply with our Saviour's injunction to "receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child." A child, the preacher observed, believes implicitly whatever his parents tell him, and does what they bid him, without thinking of inquiring whether it is reasonable or not. And this, he added, is what is required of the Christian. And so it is with respect to any thing which we are sure is really taught us, or commanded us by our heavenly Father. But we ought, first, to be very sure of this—else we may be in the condition of a silly child, who believes implicitly what it is told by some gipsy or beggar-woman who is designing to steal it from its real parents. And hence it is that we are exhorted by the apostle to be "children in malice, but in *understanding* to be men;" and that our Lord warns his disciples to "be wise as serpents, though harmless as doves." We pity a child that is deceived by some wicked impostor, through natural weakness of understanding; but *we* should deserve more blame than pity, if, when God does bestow on us the gift of reason, we refuse to use it, and resolve to be led by our feelings and affections alone, without considering at all whether these are directed toward right or wrong objects.

If you will get some of the tracts which we examined in No. IV. or No. VII., and read them over from beginning to end, you will find that they wear, at first sight, a very persuasive—or, at least, plausible—appearance; and you will wonder, perhaps, how things that seemed so weak and ridiculous, in our account of them, should look so well in their own shape. Yet, upon reflection, you will perceive that there is scarcely a single point of *argument* in any one of them which we have not stated, and stated quite fairly: only, it was our business to *strip off* all the artful ornaments which concealed the weakness of the reasoning, and which were meant to



catch the fancy of the reader, and enlist his feelings on the side of the Roman Church.

If a house looks new, and clean, and well furnished, a thoughtless purchaser will be apt to conclude that it is a good house, and in thorough repair; but an experienced builder will not be so easily satisfied. He will take down the hangings, and scrape away the paint; he will probe the walls and tear off the skirtings that hide the ends of the beams; and it will often happen that, under his examination, what seemed, at first, an elegant and well-built mansion, likely to last for many years, will look in a few hours little better than a ruin just ready to tumble down. It may seem barbarous thus to dismantle a gentleman's house; and the owner will, perhaps, cry out at the rudeness of the proceeding; but who is really to blame? Not surely the architect, who merely does his duty, but he who seeks to put off a bad article for a good one. If he had not tried to *sell* his house, no one could have molested him. He might have made it as gay as he chose, and lived there till it fell on his own head, if such had been his pleasure. But when he offered it for sale as a safe dwelling, then a cautious purchaser was bound to examine the bargain. And so we also are bound to warn you against being deluded by "whited sepulchres." It is but fair to show you what a bitter pill it is that has been artfully gilded over.

You will observe, however, that we examined those tracts only *by way of specimen*. It cannot be expected that we should answer every thing that the writers of them may choose to say from time to time. That would be a job indeed! For they seem to be abundantly prolific in controversial pamphlets; and, if we were bound to attend to every thing they publish, we should soon have little else to do.

Now there are some other very important topics besides those we have already referred to, on which we desire to lay our opinions before you: and we must not suffer ourselves to be drawn away from that part of our design into the pursuit of these light butterfly-sheets which are flying through the country. We have endeavoured to show you how to *catch* these things; and they are so flimsy, that, once caught, they may be crushed to powder by a child's finger.

But before quitting this part of our subject entirely, it may be profitable to notice, once for all, some of the chief commonplace topics that run through most of the popular declamation one hears every day in favour of the Church of Rome.

1. Roman Catholics, for example, are fond of appealing to the great extent of their communion, and the vast *numbers* comprised in it, as if this circumstance enabled them to bring an overwhelming weight of witnesses in favour of the truth of their doctrines:



and they seem to think that we show great audacity in rejecting the *judgment* of so numerous a body of men as the adherents of their church.

But these numbers, of which they boast so much, are not properly *witnesses* at all.

When Lord Nelson, at the battle of Copenhagen, was signalled to cease fighting, and resolved to disobey, he put up a telescope to his *blind eye*, and said, in a tone of bitter irony, to the officer next him, "I protest I can see no signal."

Now, if ten millions of people, who could see very well with one eye, were to look at a certain object with the other, and report upon it from hearsay, their collective testimony would go for nothing.

Let us take another illustration. There is a sort of car used in Ireland, on which the company sit at each side, back to back, while the driver is perched on a little seat in front, and has a clear view of the road all round. Now, if several persons on one side of such car should make it a point of honour never to turn round, but to put full faith in the reports of the *driver*, they might have very good sight, and be very trustworthy witnesses as to what was *before them*; but, for the rest, nothing at all.

This is the very case of the Roman Catholics: and the truth is, that the *smallest sect* of Protestants has more *witnesses* in its favour than the Church of Rome. For, suppose they were but thirty or forty in all, yet each of these *professes*, at least, to follow his own sincere conviction, based on the Scriptures, to which he has access. He *may*, indeed, be weak, and incompetent, and unduly biassed by some one else, without being aware of it; and, if so, his testimony is worth little; but still, each of these men does bear his testimony: he *is* a witness, though he may not be a powerful one. But the Roman Catholics are not witnesses at all. They *avowedly* give up their own judgment in religious matters; and can testify only that *so and so is told them* by the priest. They may be competent witnesses in other matters; but *this* they are looking at with the blind eye.

If three or four persons each writes an account of some transaction he has seen, and these agree together in the main,—here are so many distinct testimonies to the facts so described. Now, if in opposition to these, some one should produce 10,000 copies of a *book* giving a different account, and all struck off from the same types, would you not say that he was acting absurdly, since all the 10,000 *copies* could never reckon for more than one witness?

Just so it is with the vast multitude of Roman Catholics. Their creed is fixed for them; and they are trained to receive it, from the first, without hesitation or inquiry, upon the authority of "the Church," whose infallibility they think it impious to question, even though it should declare black to be white. And this ready acqui-



escence in all that the church teaches, is commended as "Supernatural faith," and much superior to the Protestant way of examination and inquiry.

Such a kind of faith, they say, relieves them from those numerous and various doubts which perplex Protestants. And this is, in a certain sense, true. A person who is taught to receive at once, without inquiry, all that is told him by a certain (supposed) infallible church, is thus exempted from a *multitude* of doubts: he has only *one* doubt in place of many; namely, whether there is any good ground for believing in this infallibility. But this one doubt is quite as likely to perplex him as all the rest put together. For how can he know that the guide he is told thus to follow is a safe one? Not, surely, on the word of that very guide; since he must *first* put full faith in it *before* he can be sure that its word is to be trusted; nor again, because his *judgment* assures him that it is a safe guide; since it expressly forbids him to use his private judgment at all.

But supposing any one does feel satisfied (as many do) to believe and trust in this manner, without any reason for doing so, it is plain that persons so circumstanced cannot be *witnesses* of the truth of their creed, since they do not even profess to have impartially examined it.

Indeed, if we were to guide ourselves merely by the *numbers* of persons who adhere to a religious system, we should have no excuse for remaining Christians at all. It is computed by those who have made careful inquiries, that, of about 980 millions—which is supposed to be the total population of the globe—about 600 millions are pagans; differing, indeed, widely from each other in their religions, but all of them strangers to any true revelation. Of the remaining 380 millions who acknowledge the divine authority of the Mosaic law, about four millions is supposed to be the number of the unconverted Jews. The remainder acknowledge that Jesus was the Christ, and was the founder of a true religion. But of these, the Mohammedans do not profess themselves *followers* of Christ, but of Mohammed, whom they regard as a greater prophet. These are computed at ninety-six millions. The professed Christians are supposed to amount to 280 millions. And of these, the members of the Greek and other churches that were never subject to that of Rome, are reckoned at about fifty-two millions; and the Protestants—that is, all Christians of various denominations, whose ancestors were once subject to the Church of Rome, at about sixty-eight millions.

The last two together, therefore, make a total of 120 millions of Christians, independent of the Church of Rome; the members of which church are computed at about 160 millions.

That church, therefore, though it is not, nor ever was, properly



*universal* [Catholic] in the sense of actually comprising *all*—or nearly all—professed Christians, yet does reckon among its members a decided majority—about four-sevenths of the whole.

And, according to the above calculations, the pagans and others who do not profess Christianity, amount to above two-thirds of the human race.

It is a melancholy thought that so large a number of our fellow-creatures should remain in ignorance and superstition. And we can no more explain or understand why this sad state of things should so long have been permitted, than we can the great mystery of which this is a part—the existence of any EVIL at all in the universe.

But it is worth observing, that the pagan nations, who are strangers to all revelation, are, as a general rule, the most uncivilized of mankind: and that, of all other nations, each will (generally speaking) be found to be the more civilized, and the further advanced in general knowledge, in the arts of life, and in good government and rational liberty, in proportion as it approaches nearer to the genuine religion of the Gospel, as taught in Scripture. Thus, the testimony of mankind—*so far forth* as men are intelligent, enlightened, civilized, and moral beings—appears to be strongly in favour of that religion. And we may expect that, as a general rule, the diffusion of real civilization, and of genuine religion, will favour and accompany each other.

If you follow out these considerations, you will find that they furnish a ready answer to an objection sometimes urged by Roman Catholics against ourselves.

“However Protestants may talk,” say they, “of examining things for themselves, and believing only on evidence, yet, in fact, the great mass of them must, in the end, fall back upon *authority*. For the whole body of the unlearned Protestants can have no security that the English versions, which they call their Bibles, are true and faithful translations of the Holy Scriptures, except the word of their clergy.”

Nothing is more common, and yet nothing can be more unreasonable, than such an objection as this; since, in reality, unlearned Protestants have, *in a free country*, the strongest possible *evidence* of the general fidelity and trustworthiness of the translations of the Bible which they read; because we may be sure that, in a free country, where every man is allowed to publish his sentiments on religious matters, any attempt to palm off a false translation of the Scriptures would be immediately detected and exposed. Many translators, we know, are at variance with each other as to the precise meaning of some *particular passages*; and many of them are very much opposed to each other as to the doctrines which they believe to be taught in Scripture. But all the different versions of the Bible agree as to the main outline of the history, and of the



discourses recorded ; and, therefore, an unlearned Christian may be as sure of the general sense of the original as if he understood the language of it, and could examine it for himself ; because he is sure that unbelievers, who are opposed to all Christians, or different sects of Christians who are opposed to each other, would not fail to point out any errors in the translations made by their opponents. Scholars have an opportunity to examine and inquire into the meaning of the original works ; and therefore the very bitterness with which they dispute against each other proves that, where they all agree, they must be right. For though all sects of Christians agree in receiving the Gospel, most of them find some difficulty in certain passages of Scripture,—some in one and some in another,—when they attempt to explain these in conformity with their own peculiar tenets.

All these translations, in short, are in the condition of witnesses placed in a witness-box in a court of justice ; examined and cross-examined by friends and enemies, and brought face to face with each other, so as to make it certain that any falsehood or mistake will be brought to light.

Such, then, and so great, is the security which an unlearned Christian has in a free country ; and you will perceive, upon reflection, that this is just the same sort of evidence as that on which you believe that the earth is round, or that there is such a city as Paris—though you may have never been at Paris, nor ever sailed round the world.

But then observe, further, that it is only in a *free country* that such security can be had. If it were notorious that no one could dare to question the common translation of the Bible ; and if all other versions of the Scripture were carefully searched for, seized and destroyed,—then there might be some colour for suspecting that the translation put into our hands was not a faithful one.

Or, again, if all, learned and unlearned, were carefully trained from their childhood to believe some particular translators *infallible* ; and if even the best scholars were discouraged from exercising their own judgment on the meaning of the originals, and were required to employ all their learning and ingenuity in defending some one version in every thing, through thick and thin,—in that case, again, we should lose much valuable security, which we have now, for the general trustworthiness of the common translations.

You see, then, that, though much evil may often arise from the freedom of thinking and speaking which we enjoy, yet much good arises from it also ; and hence you may perceive, further, how foolishly those act who would take away that freedom, lest the *unlearned* should be injured by it. For that would be taking away from the unlearned one of the greatest of all securities for the *truth* of what is told them by their betters.



But people are apt to make a confusion in their own minds between two different meanings of the word "authority," and, in consequence of that, to fall into serious mistakes.

When we speak, for example, of the *authority* of an Act of Parliament, regularly passed, we mean that the parliament has *power* to bind the country to *submit* to that act. And, you will observe, that such authority extends quite as much over those who disapprove of the measure as over those who approve it. Every good subject is bound, and every subject may be compelled, to submit to and *obey* an Act of Parliament; but no one is bound to *approve* of it, or think it wise any further than he sees reason for so thinking.

But we use the word "authority" in quite a different sense when any one says, for instance, that "Macaulay is a great *authority* in matters of English history." That means that he is a writer to whose statements and opinions about English history we should pay *attention* and *deference*, as the statements and opinions of an intelligent person, who has diligently examined the matters about which he writes.

Now it is in this sense of the word that learned and able men may be said to have a certain "authority" in questions connected with religion, from having carefully examined such questions with the aid of all the best lights which their learning and ability could supply. Whatever, in short, gives a man some peculiar advantage toward forming a correct judgment on any question, ought (unless we are pretty sure that he has wilfully neglected to use that advantage) to give his judgment some degree of weight or "authority" in this sense.

But no one could think of saying that a great historian had any *authority* to *force* men to submit to his decisions; or, on the other hand, that all Acts of Parliament should be regarded, under pain of a misdemeanour, as perfectly *wise* and well-judged.

II. Roman Catholic writers, again, sometimes produce a strong popular impression in favour of their church, by selecting some part of its system which may be painted in bright colours, and made to wear an attractive appearance, while all the rest, with which that part is connected, is kept in the back-ground.

Thus, for example, we have fine pictures drawn of the ancient monasteries. The monks are represented as all pious men, who, bent upon the cultivation of a religious temper of mind, withdrew from the world for that purpose; as if the business and duties of this world were not the very discipline which God has appointed for cultivating real righteousness in us. And then the learning, peace, and piety of the monasteries are strongly contrasted with the ignorance and irreligion and perpetual wars of the dark and troublous times, which are commonly called "the middle ages," in such



a manner as that even Protestants are sometimes led to think and say that, at least in former times, and *for* those times, the monasteries were commendable institutions. But they forget that it was the very system of which these were a part which *made* the world so dark and unquiet; and then, like the ivy which has reduced a fine building to a shattered ruin, they held together the fragments of that ruin.

Of course, if you teach men that holiness can be only, or can be best attained by withdrawing from the world into a cloister, all those who are bent on living a holy life *will* withdraw from the world; and they will, in so withdrawing, take from the world that which should reform it—the benefit of their teaching and the encouragement of their example. One after another all those most promising men, who should have been, each in the place where Providence had set him, “the light of the world,” and “the salt of the earth,” will leave the station to which God had called them, and seclude themselves within the walls of a monastery; and then, in proportion as the influence of good men is removed more and more, society will become every day worse and worse. The business and pleasures of the world will be looked upon as necessarily sinful, and those who mix in them as necessarily unholy; and the thought of using them as a discipline in godliness, and learning how to “use this world without abusing it,” will be lost out of men’s minds; till at last, by the working of such a system, all appearance of piety will really be confined to the monasteries; and the common state of society, and the ordinary course of life, will be tainted with impurity, and disturbed by violence, and the world will seem again, as it did in heathen times, to “lie in wickedness.” When the SALT is thus drawn away from the mess, and collected to particular spots, the remainder is left to putrefy.

Let us illustrate this by an example. Some, even Englishmen, who have visited slave states, are satisfied at being told that the slaves are far better off and more civilized there than in their own barbarian countries; which is, probably, for the most part true.

But *why* have the African countries continued so long in gross barbarism? They have long had intercourse with Europeans, who might have taught them to raise sugar and cotton, &c. at home, for the European markets, and in other ways might have civilized them. And it cannot be said that they are incapable of learning; since free negroes in various countries, though they have the disadvantage of being a degraded caste, are yet (however inferior to us) far advanced beyond the savage tribes of Africa.

But it is the very slave-trade itself which has kept them barbarians, by encouraging wars for the purpose of taking captives to be sold as slaves, and the villanous practices of kidnapping, and trading in each other’s happiness and liberties. It is the very sys-



tem itself, which men seek to excuse by pointing out the comfortable state of slaves when they are caught and sold, that, to a great extent, produces, and must, if persisted in, perpetuate the barbarous condition with which this comparative comfort is contrasted. The whole of these African tribes might, under a better system, have enjoyed, in freedom, far, very far—greater comfort in their native land, than that which *some* of them now possess, as slaves, in a foreign land.

So, also, in the case of the monasteries. Those who shut themselves up there might have exercised a much better and more rational piety (like the apostles and first Christians) out of them, and in the world; and if they had lived among their fellow-men, would have helped to raise the whole tone of society around them. And it was just the same evil system which buried some good men, (like lamps in sepulchres,) in the cells of monasteries, and made the general mass of society outside the walls of those establishments so bad, that it seemed to excuse their withdrawal from it.

It is to be acknowledged, indeed, that some monks sometimes did some good for the rest of the world. They were often engaged in education, attendance on the poor, copying of manuscripts, agriculture, &c., and all these were really *useful* occupations. It is not to these things we object, when we object to monasteries; for with monasteries these have no necessary connection.

Let associations be formed FOR a good object, when needful; instead of first forming an association as an end in itself, and *then* looking out for *something* for it to do; else, that something, being a secondary matter, will sometimes be ill-done, or neglected, and sometimes will be what had better be left undone.

If, for example, in the late famine, government had resolved to lay out a certain sum in making and improving the highways in Ireland, and had then proceeded to look out for overseers and labourers for the work, how different would have been the result from what took place, when they voted money for *relief*, and *then* looked out for something to be done by the people relieved! They mended some roads, and spoiled more, and made some that were not so much wanted as the agricultural labour from which they drew off the labourer.

“Oh, but there is *something* good in these institutions, and in many other parts of the Romish system also; and therefore it is wrong to blame it in the gross.” Well, thus we ought to deal with *individual men*—never pronouncing any censure on any one’s character and conduct, without adverting to his good qualities and actions, even though few and small. But not so with *systems* and *measures*. If one of these does, on the whole, more harm than good, and cannot be divested of its evil tendency, it should be *totally* condemned and rejected.



Be on your guard, then, against that *cant* of men who “know neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm,” which one now-a-days hears so often. “There is *some* truth in so and so; and, therefore, it is the *mission* of him who holds it, *though mixed with much error*, to propagate the belief of his doctrines. He is fulfilling the designs of Providence; and his errors, perhaps, are making the truth which is mixed up with them all the more easily received.” *Some* truth! Yes, the serpent had *some* truth in what he said: the forbidden tree *was* a tree of knowledge. And there was some truth, too, in Eve’s reflections. It was pleasant to the eye, and desirable to make one wise. Here was “the love of the beautiful, and of knowledge” in the very first sin which man committed. It is always some mixture of the good and true which makes evil look plausible, and makes error lasting; and, if we censure nothing but what is one mass of flagrant vice and absurdity, we shall leave precisely the most dangerous evils in the world uncensured. No mixture of evil is ever necessary for any really good purpose; and those who act as if it were, are really “doing evil that good may come.”

III. A favourite topic with all Roman Catholic convertists is *unity*. They represent themselves as the great apostles of peace and union, who are endeavouring to heal the breaches, and put an end to the divisions and distractions, of a rent and dismembered church. And this way of talking, especially in the mouths of amiable and pious men, is very attractive to many. They feel as if persons of so sweet a temper, and so peaceable a spirit, must be right.

But you may remember that, all through the great French war, Bonaparte was always talking of his desire of peace; and, in truth, did aim at what would have insured it, namely, universal empire; but *till* all the world would agree to *submit* to him, he never would let his neighbours alone.

One should look, then, not merely to the *sincerity* with which any one aims at peace, but also to the *conditions* he loads it with, and the pertinacity with which he insists on these. It *would* be very desirable to be in full communion with our fellow Christians all the world over now, just as it was very desirable then to be at peace with the French and Italians, &c., and other people under Napoleon’s influence; but peace is too dearly purchased by slavery of any kind—certainly by spiritual slavery. Truth is the first thing. Aim at that. Those who reach truth will reach unity, because truth is *one*. But, on the other hand, men may, and often do, gain unity without truth; which is so far from being a good, that it is a great evil. It makes falsehood strong, and the professors of it contented in their error.



IV. But what catches unthinking persons more than almost any thing else, is the pretence that it is *safest* to belong to the Roman Catholic Church. "Protestants," they say, "acknowledge that a man *may* be saved in our church, while we declare that no Protestant can be saved: it is *safer*, therefore, to join us, who, by the confession of both parties, may attain salvation."

Now, a moment's reflection will show you how empty and childish is this way of arguing. Indeed, if there were any thing in it, it would show that a man should always be on the side of those who were most presumptuous and most uncharitable. Let an ignorant fanatic start up and found a sect, of which the one peculiar tenet is, that men should button their coats behind, and boldly declare that no one can be saved who does not conform to that absurd rule, and then, according to this way of arguing, we should all be bound to submit to his injunctions, *as the safest course*. Nay, much more should we be bound in such a case as that; since no one could say that there was any thing absolutely immoral in turning his coat the wrong way. Or, suppose the captain of a crazy ship chooses to say that those who sail in a sound and well-appointed packet are sure to be lost, and therefore persuades you to trust yourself to him, would you, because it is granted that his leaky vessel *may possibly* reach port, think it *safest* to leave the good ship and take your passage in the bad one? No. You would, no doubt, say—"I see no ground at all for this impudent man's threatenings of disaster to those who will not sail with him; but *I do* see very good grounds for fearing that, if I embark in his ship, I shall go to the bottom; and, therefore, it is safest to take the good ship, and leave him to navigate his old foundered craft as well as he is able; wishing him heartily, all the while, a better voyage than he deserves. If any persons are so imposed upon as to *believe* his to be the safer ship, they are to be pitied for their mistake; but, if *I* were to embark in it, believing as I do that it is a crazy vessel, I should be guilty of an *inexcusable* folly.

The real question is, which is most likely to speak truly, he who says that there are great errors and much danger in the Church of Rome, or he who says that you cannot be saved out of it? That is the real question for honest, truth-loving people to determine.

Besides, Roman Catholics are quite inconsistent in using such an argument as this, because determining by the *safer* course is what has place only in cases of doubt, and has respect only to action, not belief. Men cannot really *believe* a thing, merely because they think it safest to believe it, though they can act as if it were true.

Now, according to Roman Catholics, you cannot really belong to their church unless you *believe*, without the slightest doubt or hesi-



tation, every thing which that church teaches, even though it were to teach that black is white. It is not enough to *act as if* what the church teaches were true, but you must believe it faithfully, or else you cannot be saved. Wherefore, all that this argument of theirs, even if it were a good one, would prove is, that a man is *more safe* if he believe all that the Church of Rome teaches, than if he does otherwise. But how will that help him to believe it, without the least doubt and hesitation, when it is from the very supposed doubtfulness of the case that the inference is made?

If you are in doubt between the arguments of the Protestants and Roman Catholics, there might be some sense in saying: "Act according to the safest side;" but what sense is there in saying: *Because* you are in *doubt*, believe firmly, and without any doubt or hesitation, in what seems to be the safest side of the question?

But even as to action, *we* are really on *the safest side*, and not they. For the rule in doubtful cases is to abstain from doing what is *doubtful*. Now most of what we hold and practise is allowed by Roman Catholics to be true and good in itself, only, they *add on* to it other things which we say are false and wrong. The safe course, then, if there be any doubt about these matters, is to have nothing to do with additions.

Thus, for example, both parties grant it *safe* to pray to God through Jesus Christ; but Roman Catholics say it is further *useful* to ask the saints to intercede with God for them, which practise Protestants regard as "will-worship," and strongly tending to rank idolatry. Here, then, the safe course plainly is to abstain from so dangerous a practice.

So also as to pictures and images. It is granted that these are not *necessary*; for the church, for some centuries, abhorred the use of them, and Roman Catholics themselves grant that they are apt to be abused. The *safe* course, then, is to let them alone.

Again, it is certainly lawful to have public prayers in the vulgar tongue: but to offer them in a strange language *seems* to be forbidden in Scripture,—to be absurd,—and far from *edifying*. Saying mass in Latin, then, among people who do not understand Latin, is plainly not the *safest* course.

Again, to celebrate the communion in both kinds—that is, giving both the cup and the bread to all communicants, is manifestly *lawful*; for it was so celebrated by Christ himself, and by the church after him for many ages. But taking the cup from the laity is confessedly a *new invention*, a departure from Christ's institution, and to be vindicated by no even plausible argument. To celebrate the communion, therefore, in both kinds, as Protestants do, is manifestly the *safer* course.

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Thus we have gone through some of the chief topics used by Romish convertists. But do not suppose that those who openly avow that their object is to bring you into subjection to that church are the only false teachers against whom you are bound to be on your guard. The process of conversion to Romanism is, on the contrary, much more successfully carried on by others who loudly disavow—and in many cases sincerely—any such design. To *these* we mean to direct your attention in the next Caution.

END OF PART I.



*Publication*  
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CAUTIONS

FOR

# THE TIMES.

ADDRESSED TO

THE PARISHIONERS OF A PARISH IN ENGLAND, BY THEIR  
FORMER RECTOR,

RICHARD WHATELY, D.D.

ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

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IN THREE PARTS.

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# CAUTIONS FOR THE TIMES.

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## No. IX.

“Beware of false prophets, which come unto you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

It is no waste of time to look back occasionally upon one’s work, and see what has been done. For, except we pause awhile now and then to review what we have already gone over, we shall be apt to forget its connection with the rest; and so, taking up each topic as quite a new subject, we shall be tempted to dismiss entirely from our minds what went before. A mason must take care to keep his new work level with the old: else, the line will slant from the perpendicular, and the wall be in danger of falling down.

And this is more requisite in what comes before you (like these “Cautions”) from time to time in separate numbers, than if you had it all together in one view, collected in a book.

We will return then, for a few minutes, to the beginning, and see how we arrived at the present point in our subject.

What led us to send you these “Cautions,” was the great agitation raised in England by the “papal aggression.” The Pope had put in force the claim (which he had *always* made) of governing all baptized persons in England, just as if we had no bishops of our own; and the gentleman whom he appointed Archbishop of Westminster openly declared, in a very offensive manner, that he had the exclusive right of ruling, in spiritual matters, all persons throughout the district attached to his See.

The avowal of such bold pretensions, and the arrogant way in which they were put forward, excited general indignation; and many people in England seemed seized with a kind of panic, as if the Pope were just going to make us all his subjects by force, whether we would or not, and that, consequently, we should prepare ourselves for a forcible resistance; and, in men’s common talk in conversation, and their speeches at the public meetings called upon that occasion, there was such a mixing up of civil and religious questions—of the danger to our *liberties* from Roman Catholic ambition and intolerance, and the danger to our *faith and morals* from Roman Catholic false teaching; and then, again, of the insult offered to our church by acting as if it did not exist, and of the insult to the queen in assuming such titles as she only has a right



to bestow,—there was such a mixing up of all these matters together as seemed to show that many of those who talked most, and seemed most likely to lead others, had themselves very confused notions of the whole matter. Men declared their wish to tolerate the Roman Catholic Church, which is essentially episcopal and subject to the Pope, and, at the same time, not to allow of Roman Catholic bishops, or direct intercourse with the court of Rome;—they demanded measures to vindicate the royal supremacy, by preventing the assumption of certain titles in England, while they were willing—many of them—to put up with such assumption in Ireland; though the royal supremacy is the same in both countries:\* they required measures to be taken in England for checking Romanism, which they said would be no persecution *there*, while they granted that such measures would be persecution if extended to Ireland. They professed great alarm at the increase of the numbers of Roman Catholics *in England*, and called for legislation to prevent the dangers thence likely to arise to civil and religious liberty, while they thought that no such danger was threatened by the numbers of the *Irish* Roman Catholics, which are more than twice as large. Their inconsistent demands, in short, might remind one of the prince in the Arabian Nights, who asked for a tent large enough to cover an army of 100,000 men, and yet small enough to fit in his pocket. That would be a very unreasonable thing to ask, except (as he did) of a *fairy queen*.

In this state of things, we thought it expedient to address to you some timely Cautions—to point out to you the folly and wick-

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\* Some persons seem to fancy that the Roman Catholic Relief Bill of 1829 has so completely modified the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland, that no arguments can fairly be *now* drawn from that, against adopting different measures toward Roman Catholics in the two parts of the United Kingdom. They forget that the Union was expressly designed by Mr. Pitt, who procured it, as a preliminary step *toward* Roman Catholic emancipation. He intended, by the Union, to remove all pretext for separating the case of the established church in Ireland from that of England. Had Ireland remained a separate kingdom, with a legislature of its own, and had the Roman Catholics been, in such a state of things, admitted to equal civil privileges with Protestants,—then, since they possess a preponderance of numbers, (though not of wealth or intelligence,) it would have been hard to resist their claim to have their religion *established* in that kingdom. But by making the two countries *one kingdom*, and the two churches *one church*, that objection was taken away; since now, even in point of numbers, Protestants have a great preponderance in the United Kingdom. Yet now that very measure of Roman Catholic emancipation is said to have nullified the Act of Union, which the Act of Union itself was procured to facilitate. And all this time they blamed those who agitated for a repeal of the Union, while they were themselves setting the example of seeking to violate one of the most solemn stipulations of the Act of Union. They were for leaving two millions of Roman Catholics in England at the mercy of the Protestants, because these latter were the stronger; and two millions of Protestants in Ireland, where these were the weaker party, at the mercy of the Roman Catholics; as much as to say, in each country let might overcome right!



edness of attempting to put down religious error, or to repel insults and aggressions upon our faith or church, by civil penalties or laws of any kind; and to show you that the great danger, in the present case, was one which could be met by no legislative enactment, but by each individual for himself.

But, in doing this, we never said or implied that there was no danger to civil liberty from the Pope's influence in this kingdom, or that such a danger might not be properly guarded against by acts of Parliament. We did not meddle with that question; because our object was to direct your attention to what lies in your *own* power—not to that which must be left to the wisdom of our rulers. If a great tract of land be unwholesome from fens and marshes, a physician may do much good by telling his patients who have to travel through it, how to fortify their constitutions against the bad air and poisonous vapours; but it would be idle for him to exhort private persons to get it drained, because that can only be done at the public expense.

In that case, however, a complete effectual remedy might be provided by a public measure. The fen might be *drained*, and then the inhabitants and travellers would no longer need the physician's prescriptions. But, in this case, whatever public measures may effect, they cannot of themselves remedy the evil, or render the care of private persons unnecessary; while, on the other hand, the whole danger *may be* prevented, and entirely prevented, without any legislative enactment.

For, the Pope's authority is built upon opinion. His power (except within his own principality, in which he is supported by foreign bayonets) is exercised directly only on the minds of those who embrace the doctrines of his religion. The foundations of his dominion, then, are these doctrines, and they are laid in the minds of men. If, therefore, men's faith in those doctrines be generally subverted, his dominion falls to the ground at once; and all his boasts and pretensions become nothing but empty vaunting, not worth a wise man's attention. But if, on the contrary, those doctrines spread until the Roman Catholics become a considerable majority in this kingdom, (as may well be the case if they are opposed only with Acts of Parliament,) they will soon be able to *repeal* all the laws which may now be passed for the security of our civil liberty. And if our rulers should be so unwise (which they never will be) as to pass a *law* against any one's becoming a convert (openly) to Romanism, this would give Roman Catholics a great advantage; because no one could be sure that his neighbours were not all *secretly* Roman Catholics in their hearts.

The great danger, then, (even to civil liberty,) arises from the spread of Romish doctrines; and *that* is a danger which cannot be guarded against by laws and penalties, but by fair argument.



And, accordingly, it was by fair argument that we sought to deal with it.

We considered (in Nos. II. III. and VIII.) some of the most plausible popular topics advanced by Romish convertists; and lest it should be thought that we had misrepresented the force of their reasonings, we examined (in Nos. IV. and VII.) a great number of the Tracts which some of the ablest and most dexterous managers of their cause are now busily circulating through England; and we made it (as we trust) pretty plain that, wherever the secret of their success *does* lie, it does *not* lie in the strength of their arguments.

But the secret of their success is to be found (as we pointed out in Nos. V. and VI.) in the tendency of corrupt human nature toward such a system as the Romish. Each of us has a traitor in his own breast, always ready and willing to open the gate to the enemy. We are all naturally *prone* to those errors upon which Romanism is built; and, in consequence of that natural proneness, too many Protestants have already admitted principles, which, if fairly carried out, must inevitably lead to the reception of the whole body of Romish tenets. The seed has been, as it were, already deposited in their minds. It *may* lie long dormant. But as soon as circumstances favour its growth, it will spring up after its kind, and bear the proper fruits of its species.

You may see a clear proof of this in the progress of what is called the "Tractite"\* party toward Romanism.

Not many years ago, a considerable number of clergymen and others became alarmed at what they considered an "aggression" of the State upon the Church, and at the great spread of dissenting principles and practices in England. They desired (very properly) to see the church in a position in which it should be able to stand without relying upon the secular power, and to obtain union and due subordination among its members. But, instead of looking in Scripture for the *true* foundation upon which Christ has placed his church, in full confidence that, when found, it would prove a sufficient one for all needful purposes, they seem rather to have looked about them for arguments to defend such a system of church authority as they thought necessary for the times. Their intention was to devise a "middle way" between Romanism and Dissent; but they executed that intention by taking the *principles* of Romanism, and, for a while, stopping short of the necessary *conclusions* from those principles.

Their scheme was pretty nearly this. They agreed with the Roman Catholics in holding that "the Catholic Church" (meaning thereby one visible organized body of Christians under one govern-

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\* So called from the publications (*Tracts for the Times*) by which they first sought to influence public opinion.



ment) was the authoritative expounder of the will of God; and was consequently the authority to whose decisions all men were bound to submit their private judgments; only, they did not allow that the *Pope* was the head of the Catholic Church. They said that the governors of the church were bishops, who could only be ordained by bishops in a continual succession from the apostles, and who alone could impart to others the power of administering the sacraments necessary to salvation; so that they at once excluded from the church, and from all the ordinary means of grace, the whole body of dissenters in this country, as also almost all the Protestant churches on the continent of Europe, who do not pretend to any such "apostolical succession" of men ordained by a continual chain of bishops down from the apostles' times. The "Catholic Church," then, according to them, was the whole body of orthodox believers living under the government of bishops; and they held that councils of such bishops (meaning thereby *the majority* in councils of bishops) were the supreme authority in the Catholic Church for determining religious faith and practice. And the rule which the governors of the church were to follow in their decisions was (according to these persons) Scripture as interpreted by tradition—that is, such a meaning as could be fixed on the written records of the apostles' teaching, by reports of their teaching delivered down by word of mouth.

But, as it was evident that, if the Greek or Roman Catholic Church be not exclusively the Catholic Church, there is now no such church to be found as they imagined the Catholic Church to be—that is, one body under one government, able—or even claiming to be able—to decide on matters of faith, and make laws for all Christians; hence, they were obliged to look for such a body in *past* times. They settled, therefore, that the whole church now, except ourselves, was in a state of schism; which schism began when the Greek and Latin Churches broke from communion with one another: by which unfortunate event the possibility of holding general councils of bishops was cut off. But our church, they said, intended to keep faithfully to the model of the ancient church as it stood compact and entire before that schism: and was to be obeyed so far as it delivered to us the faith and discipline of the united primitive church. Thus, the faith and discipline of the church of the first six centuries became practically their guide; and to it they set themselves to conform as closely as they could.

Now, the first six centuries was a period during which those errors which we commonly call Romish, were gradually stealing in unperceived among Christians. The seeds of corruption in human nature were, during that period, springing up into poisonous weeds; which, being left to grow unchecked, spread wide over the whole of Christendom, till at last they appeared full-blown in that shape



which they wear in Romanism, and in the Eastern Churches. It was but natural, therefore, that when these men took the writers of the first six centuries for their guides (without venturing to try them by Scripture) they should be led on, step by step, to that very Romish system, toward which the church of those ages had been itself moving. They were like travellers who, coming to the brink of a precipice, go back to the point from which the road which conducted thither set out, only to turn round and follow the same track again. The same principle which induced them to explain Scripture by the teaching of the church in the second century, obliged them to explain the teaching of the church in the second century by that of the third, and so on; till finally, the last and most corrupt teaching of the church became ever the authorized expounder of all the rest.

Accordingly, as their own eyes gradually opened to the real state of the case, they first perceived, and then began cautiously to avow the necessity of drawing daily nearer and nearer to Romanism.

They taught, for example, that the Lord's supper is a real sacrifice offered by the priest, for the living and the dead. Only, they added that this doctrine had been much *abused* by the Church of Rome.

They said that the bread and wine were changed by the words of consecration, and "became the body and blood of Christ;" only they would not call that change *transubstantiation*, but regarded the manner of it as a mystery not to be curiously inquired into.

They said that priests had the power of remitting sins by absolution, after confession and penance; and that penance and absolution by a priest were the only way to obtain remission of grievous sins after baptism. Only, they added, that they could not go the *whole length* of the Romish doctrine on that subject.\* And so in other particulars.

It was no wonder, then, that many of those who had thus been brought on to the very brink of Romanism, should, when they became aware of their real position, pass on. But much as their case is to be lamented, and great as the damage is which they have done to our church, *they* are not the members of the party that are most to be feared. They have left us and become *avowed* Romanists, and by that very act have set us on our guard against them.

Much more formidable are the leaders of the party who still remain in outward communion with us. They "come to us in sheep's clothing," professing to be loyal and devoted members of our church, and therefore they find too often ready listeners. They may be compared to a *recruiting dépôt* for the Church of Rome, kept up among ourselves: and, sooner or later, the persons who

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\* See the Bishop of Ripon's *Pastoral Letter to the People of Saint Saviour's*. Appendix.



fall under their influence very generally become open converts to Romanism. And their efforts are the more insidious, because they, for the most part, begin by loudly declaring that they teach nothing but the recognised doctrines of the Established Church,—that they are inculcating “church principles,” and that all who are opposed to them are little better than schismatics.

We intend hereafter to examine their “church principles” more fully, and point out to you how repugnant they are both to Scripture and to reason. But, at present, we will confine ourselves to showing that these are *not* the principles of our church, but, in many respects, quite opposed to its decisions.

In doing this, we shall not refer you to the works of old divines of our church, many of which may not be readily within your reach, but shall confine ourselves to those public authorized formularies which, we trust, you all have in your hands—the Articles and Liturgy of our church.

The writings of our old divines are, many of them, very valuable, and, in one sense, of *great authority*—that is, entitled to respect and deference; but they are not *of authority* as determining what any man should hold in order to be a consistent member of the Anglican Church. Our eminent divines have, in their writings, declared their own opinions, which, in some matters, are very various. But they had no power to determine the principles of the church. Those were settled by the church itself, and set forth in its public documents. And the very circumstance that opinions going beyond what those public documents express, did exist, and were *well known* and *current* in the days of our Reformers,—this gives even the more force to their deliberate omission of these, and their distinct declaration of what they do mean to maintain.

I. Now, in the first place, on looking at the Articles and Liturgy, you will find that our church never puts itself in the position of a mere subordinate member of some great body, nor professes to act under the authority of the Church Catholic, and merely to enforce the decrees of that church in matters of faith and discipline; but, as for matters of faith, it propounds them directly on the authority of Scripture; and, as for matters of discipline, it deals with them as having itself a perfect independent right of ordering such matters as may seem best to itself.

There are, for example, no ancient Christian documents, except the Scripture, that can more justly claim to be called “Catholic” than the three creeds, which have been received, from times of great antiquity, by the majority of Christians both in the East and West. Yet, in recognising these, our church makes no mention whatever of any *such* claims which they may have on our respect. It does not say that these creeds should be received as the voice and judgment of the universal church, or as attested by Catholic



tradition; but, "the three creeds . . . . . ought thoroughly to be received and believed; *for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.*"—Art. VIII.

Then, again, as for general councils, which must be the supreme governing authority of the Catholic Church, if there *be* any such authority, our articles plainly declare them to be neither necessary nor infallible—"General councils," says Art. XXI., "may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of princes. And when they be gathered together (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be *declared* [plainly proved] that they be taken out of Holy Scripture."

Now, if our Reformers had thought, and meant to teach, that general councils are the supreme governors of the church, and divinely instituted for that purpose, they would never have said that it was unlawful to convoke them without the will and commandment of princes; because that would have been making a divine institution subject to the will of man. Nor, if they had meant to teach that private judgment must always submit to the decision of a general council, would they have said, that, "things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture." For it would be quite childish to say this, if, after all, the council were to be the only judge whether or not this all-important point *could* be "declared" or made evident. If any man, or body of men, refer us to Scripture as the sole authoritative standard, meaning that we are not called on to believe any thing as a necessary point of faith on their word, but only on *our own* conviction that it is scriptural, then they place our faith on the basis, not of human authority, but of divine. But if they call on us, as a point of conscience, to receive whatever is proved to *their* satisfaction from Scripture, even though it may appear to *us* unscriptural, then, instead of releasing us from the usurped authority of man taking the place of God, they are putting upon us two burdens instead of one.

"You require us," we might reply, "to believe, first, that whatever you teach is *true*; and, secondly, besides this, to believe also that it is a truth *contained in Scripture*; and we are to *take your word* for both." Our Reformers manifestly did not require such *double submission* as this to assemblies which they expressly declare to be *fallible*.

Again, as for matters of discipline, rites, ceremonies, &c., our church always speaks of *these* as being (except the two sacraments) of human institution, and of *itself* as having a perfect right to esta-



blish or alter them. "It is not necessary," says Art. XXXIV., "that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly alike: for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed, according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word. . . . Every particular or national church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies or rites of the church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done unto edifying." Accordingly we have, in the Preface to the Common Prayer, a long and distinct account of the grounds upon which the church went in arranging these matters; in which the Reformers, all along, treat both the Liturgy and the ceremonies as things of mere human authority, and as falling entirely under their own control. "The forms," they say, "of divine worship, and the rites and ceremonies to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent and alterable, and so acknowledged, it is but reasonable that, upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigency of times and occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as to those who are in place of authority should, from time to time, seem either necessary or expedient." And, again:—"There was never any thing *by the wit of man* so well devised or so sure established, which in continuance of time hath not been corrupted; as, among other things, it may plainly appear by the Common Prayers in the church, commonly called Divine Service." Then, again, when our Reformers are vindicating their conduct in retaining some of the ancient ceremonies, what is their language? Do they speak of themselves as *bound* to do so by their allegiance to the "Church Catholic," by whose authority they were established? Do they betray the least suspicion that, in handling such things, they are dealing with a "sacred deposit," a system of rites, like those of the old (Levitical) law, prescribed by the Spirit of God, "a pattern showed in the mount,"—a body of ceremonies invested with a mysterious and "sacramental" character? Quite otherwise. "If men," they say, "shall think much that *any* of the old do remain, and would rather have all devised anew, then such men, granting some ceremonies convenient to be had, surely where the old may be well used, there they cannot reasonably reprove the old only for their age, without bewraying of their own folly. . . . Furthermore, such shall have no just cause with the ceremonies reserved to be offended. For as those be taken away which were most abused and did burden men's consciences without any cause, so the other that remain are retained for a discipline and order, which (upon just causes) may be *altered and changed*, and therefore are not to be esteemed equal to God's law. . . . And in these our doings we condemn no other nations, nor prescribe any thing but to our own people only; for we think it convenient that every



country should use such ceremonies as they shall think best to the setting forth of God's honour and glory, &c."

All this shows clearly the meaning of Art. XX., when it says, "*The church* hath power to decree rites and ceremonies." For, from the passages just quoted, it manifestly appears that the Article is not speaking of a (supposed) universal church, acting as a corporate body through its governors, but of *each and every* "particular or national church." And this way of speaking is very common. When we say, for example, that "it is the duty of *the* magistrate to punish crimes against the state," we do not mean to indicate some *universal* magistrate, and *universal* state, but we mean that *every* magistrate is bound to punish crimes against that particular state in which he holds his office. When we pray that God would "speed *the* plough," we do not mean to imply that there is one grand *universal plough*; but we pray God to bless the work of each and every plough employed in agriculture.

And so, most manifestly, in Art. XIX. "*The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered:*"—there, we say, manifestly also the Article is speaking not of one visible organized body, as the universal church,\* but of each and every particular visible church of Christ. It is laying down, in short, what is, and all that is, *essential* to the notion<sup>†</sup> of a true church.†

II. And among these essentials to a true church, you will observe, the Article makes no mention of any *particular form of*

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\* And that it is not the universal church that is spoken of, but each particular church, is further proved by the sentence immediately following, in which mention is made of the Churches of Alexandria, Rome, &c.

† Compare Arts. XIX. and XXIII. with the corresponding Articles in the Augsburg Confession:—

#### ENGLISH ARTICLES.

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by those who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard.

#### AUGSBURG CONFESSION.

Est autem Ecclesiâ congregatio Sanctorum, in quâ Evangelium rectè docetur, et rectè administrantur sacramenta.

Docent quod nemo debeat in Ecclesiâ publice docere, aut Sacramenta administrare, nisi rite vocatur.



*government.* It does not lay down the great “church principle,”—that, “where there is no bishop, there can be no church;” but merely says that the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments are necessary to constitute a congregation a visible church of Christ. And this silence is made more emphatic and significant by the language of Art. XXIII.—“It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by *men who have public authority given them in the congregation*, to call and send ministers into the Lord’s vineyard.” Is it credible that, if our Reformers had meant carefully to inculcate, as a “church principle,” that no persons, in any Christian church, could lawfully call and send ministers, but only bishops, ordained by a regular succession from the apostles, they would not, on this occasion, have said so—when it is *the only occasion*, in all the Book of Articles, on which the calling and sending of ministers is ever mentioned? The plain good sense of every unprejudiced reader will, we think, at once determine that such a thing is quite incredible.

But why, then—it may be asked—has our church determined (in the Preface to the Book of Ordination, &c.) that “no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful bishop, priest, or deacon *in the United Church of England and Ireland*, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to the form hereafter following, *or hath had formerly Episcopal consecration, or ordination?*”\* But why is *Episcopal* ordination thus made necessary for ministering in the Anglican communion, if the Reformers did not intend to make the necessity of Episcopal orders a fundamental principle of our church? The answer is very easy to be found, if we only consider the circumstances of the times. If our Reformers had admitted men, ordained abroad in Protestant Presbyterian churches, to minister here without reordination, they would, by that act, have compelled all who held the necessity of *Episcopal* orders to quit their communion, because *they* would have scrupled to receive the sacraments at the hands of men whom they regarded as unlawfully (or, at least, irregularly) ordained; while, on the other hand, even the

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\* Some persons who pretend that this clause has decided the doctrine of apostolical succession to be a principle of our church, endeavour, most inconsistently, to explain the silence of Art. XXIII., by saying that such words as “Bishop” and “Episcopal” are quite ambiguous, and would not exclude “Danish Bishops and German Superintendents.” But, if those words would have been ambiguous in the Article, how come they to be unambiguous here? If unambiguous here, why should they have been avoided in the Article.



strictest Presbyterians could not deny the validity of Episcopal ordination; since, even if there *ought to be* no such separate order as that of bishops in the church, yet our bishops are at least *presbyters*.

Our Reformers, then, without passing any judgment upon other Christian bodies; chose for themselves, in the exercise of their undoubted rights, that none should minister in *their communion* except men *episcopally* ordained; and *that*, as it would seem, because such a rule was the only (or most obvious) way of excluding neither those who *held*, nor those who *denied* the necessity of Episcopal ordination.\*

It is the height of presumption, therefore, for any one to put forward the doctrine of the necessity of "apostolical succession," (in its modern sense,) as a principle of our church, and stigmatize as disloyal members, and false brethren, all who doubt or deny that doctrine.

III. Again, with respect to the rule of faith—is it credible that, if our Reformers intended to make it a "church principle," that tradition "blended with Scripture" is the rule of faith, they should have expressed themselves as they have? "Holy Scripture," they say, Art. VI., "containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." But they do *not* add, that it is equally necessary to prove the articles of faith by tradition, or that it is only by tradition that the true sense of Scripture can be determined.

If that had been their meaning, is it credible that, not only here, but in the exhortation to persons to be ordained priests, and in the questions addressed to them, the church should have been wholly silent upon the necessity, or even the importance of tradition? The candidates are, you know, admonished that they cannot hope for success in their ministry without employing "doctrine and exhortation *taken out of the Holy Scriptures*, and a life agreeable *thereto*;" they are exhorted to consider "how studious they ought to be in reading and learning *the Scriptures*, and in framing the manners both of themselves and of them that specially pertain unto them, according to the rule of *the same Scriptures*;" and they are shown how, "by daily reading and weighing of *the Scriptures*, they may wax riper and stronger in their ministry;" but not a word of solemn admonition is added on the necessity of "blending" tradition with

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\* It is worth observing, that you might say with perfect truth, "No man can be, in this country, a regular and real justice of the peace who has not been commissioned by the queen;" and yet you would not mean by that, that a justice of the peace in the United States of America is no lawful magistrate, because the government of that country is republican, and they have no king or queen.



those Scriptures, and trusting only to that sense of Scripture which tradition is supposed to fix.

They are asked: "Are you persuaded that the *Holy Scriptures* contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ; and are you determined, out of the *said Scriptures*, to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by *Scripture*?" But they are not asked whether they will submit implicitly to have their judgment of the sense of Scripture determined by the testimony of tradition.

Now, is it credible that, if the church intended thus to blend tradition with its rule of faith, it should have been silent upon the subject, when an occasion like this occurred, which would seem to demand some notice of it?

IV. Again, if our church had really meant to sanction the belief that, in the communion, there is an offering made of the bread and wine, after consecration, as a sacrifice for the people by the priest—is it credible that every syllable which, in the old Liturgies, implied such an offering, should have been *carefully struck out* of our Communion Service; while, at the same time, it is carefully expressed that we *do* offer a very different sacrifice—"a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," and "present ourselves, our souls and bodies, a reasonable [rational], holy, and lively sacrifice unto God?"

V. Again, if our church had meant to teach that the bread and wine in the communion, do literally become or contain the body and blood of Christ, so as that the body and blood of Christ are received in the *hands and mouths* of the communicants, would it teach (as we find it teaching in Art. XXVIII.) that "the body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And THE MEAN WHEREBY THE BODY OF CHRIST IS RECEIVED AND EATEN IS FAITH?" And (as in Art. XXIX.) "the wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth . . . . *the sacrament* of the body and blood of Christ, yet *in nowise* are they partakers of Christ?" For, if the elements become, or contain the body of Christ, it cannot be denied that the wicked do receive his body with their hands and mouths, though not to the benefit of their souls. And hence you may easily understand that, when in the Catechism our church declares that "the body and blood of Christ are *verily and indeed* taken and received BY THE FAITHFUL in the Lord's supper,"—it means by those words, "verily and indeed,"—"in the best and highest sense,"—or, as it afterward adds, to the "strengthening and refreshing of *our souls*;" just as when



our Lord declared that his flesh was “meat *indeed*,”\* and that he was the “*true bread*,” he meant bread and meat in the highest and best sense,—that is, *spiritual* food for the soul of man.

VI. Lastly, if our church had really meant to teach that her presbytery had the power of remitting or retaining sins as against God, is it credible that, when our Reformers retained the old form of ordaining priests, “Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained,” they should have *explained* them by this addition, “And be thou a faithful *dispenser of the word of God, and of his holy sacraments?*” and again, “Take thou authority to *preach the word of God, and to minister the holy sacraments?*” Is it not manifest that our Reformers have here distinctly explained what privilege they thought to be conveyed by those words of Christ,—namely, the privilege of *declaring* by the word, and sealing by the sacraments, the promise of God’s forgiveness to all penitent sinners? Accordingly, you will find that the ordinary form in our Morning Prayer of “declaring and pronouncing” God’s forgiveness—though plainly only a *declaration* of God’s pardon—is called “the absolution or remission of sins.” And likewise, in the Communion, that is called an “Absolution,” which is manifestly nothing more than a *prayer* for God’s forgiveness. Nor, when the church has thus explained what it means by the privilege of “remitting sins,” imparted to its presbyters, and given notice of the large sense in which it uses the term “absolution,” can any thing be more unfair than to lay hold of the word “absolve” in the office for the Visitation of the Sick, as if it must needs mean more than “declare God’s forgiveness?” If the church really held that the priest could himself forgive sins, and that his ministry was instituted for the express purpose of remitting them, upon confession and penance, it would have been grossly negligent of a plain duty, if it had not earnestly *pressed* all men to seek the benefit of absolution. On the contrary, you know it never speaks of penance, but as a punishment inflicted on scandalous transgressors, to *bring them to repentance*, and as a warning to others, as in the Communion Service; never invites any to confession, but such as are troubled in conscience, and perplexed with doubts; nor permits private and personal absolution, but upon the “earnest entreaty” of the penitent.

On the whole, then, it is plain that these so-called “church principles” are so far from being principles of our church, that some are expressly condemned, and none of them recognised or implied in any of our public formularies. So that, when the upholders of these principles put themselves forward as the only true children of the Anglican Church, we may borrow, in our own behalf, the

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\* John vi. 55.



words which a great prelate once applied to some of their predecessors :—"I will not meddle with that, whether T. G. be a competent judge who are the true and genuine sons of the Church of England. No doubt, in his opinion, those who come nearest to the Church of Rome are such : and advance such speculations as lay the charge of schism at her own door. But true sons are no more for laying division to the charge of their mother than the true mother was for dividing the son. Those are certainly the most genuine sons of our church who own her doctrine, defend her principles, and conform to her rules ; and are most ready to maintain her cause against all her enemies. And among these there is no difference, and there ought to be no distinction. But if any frame a church of their own heads, without any regard to the Articles, Homilies, and current doctrine of our church, and yet will call that the Church of England, and themselves the only genuine sons of it, I do not question T. G. and your brethren would be glad to have them thought so, to lessen our number and impair our interest ; but none that understand and value our church will endure such a pernicious discrimination among the sons of the same mother, as though some few were fatally determined to be the sons of our church, whatever their works and merits were ; and others absolutely cast off, notwithstanding the greatest service."\*

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## No. X.

"Beware of false prophets, that come unto you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

It may probably have surprised some of our readers, that we should have begun with the *church*, rather than Scripture ; that we should have begun (as we did in the last Caution) with showing how inconsistent the principles of the Tractites are with those of our church, as set forth in its authoritative formularies. Some may have said to themselves, upon reading that Caution, "After all, this is a matter of comparatively small importance. The *first* point is to show that the Tractite opinions are not agreeable to *Scripture* ; since, if that be once proved, they are entirely overthrown, whether the church condemn them, or condemn them not."

Now that, no doubt, is the first point in real intrinsic importance. But the first point in importance is not necessarily, on that account,

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\* Stillingfleet. Three Conferences, pp. 19, 20.



the point to be always taken first *in order*. If we had begun with showing the unscripturalness of these pretended *church* principles, *some* would have concluded that our church (to which the Tractites profess such devotion) is itself at variance with Scripture. "See," they would have said, (as, through indiscreet management on our part, dissenters have too often been allowed to say;) "see in what difficulties members of the Established Church are involved, when they come forward to oppose Romanizing tendencies in their own body. They are obliged to throw the decisions of their own church overboard entirely, and attack their opponents with nothing but scriptural arguments, just as if there were no such books as the Liturgy and Thirty-Nine Articles in existence." And they might even have gone on (with what is really the bitterest satire) to *compliment* us on being happily unfaithful to our engagements, and inconsistent with those formularies to which we have solemnly recorded our assent.

Others, again, familiar with the cry of "church principles," and already inclined to the notion that the church is to be their guide in the interpretation of Scripture, would have listened with prejudice to any reasonings about the sense of Scripture; concluding that, since our inferences contradicted what they supposed to be "church teaching," there must be some fallacy, though they could not tell what.

It is true, indeed, that we might have *afterward* gone on to disabuse both parties; but then, perhaps, it might have been too late. It is a bad plan to fire a gun first, and point it afterward.

We began, therefore, with demolishing the stronghold of the Tractites, their pretended adherence to the church. After that, the other post may be carried with ease, being, indeed, quite unsupported.

It seemed, too, that no time was to be lost in trying to stop the growing mischief done by this vain, but confident (and too often unrefuted) assumption on their part, of "carrying out church principles," and "acting up to the requirements of our church."

Many hasty opponents, for example, give these men a great advantage by rashly crying out against the rules and declarations of our church as intolerable relics of popish superstition, whenever they find such rules enforced, and declarations relied on, by those whom they suspect of a tendency toward Romanism. This is really playing into the hands of the Tractites; it is allowing them to say, "You see that *our* opponents are those who call the *church* popish."

Now we are not saying that there may not be some things in our Liturgy and Canons which might, at the present day, be advantageously omitted or altered. There may be some things which our Reformers retained (though they would otherwise have



changed them) to avoid giving general and unnecessary offence, and which (from an alteration in men's habits and ways of thinking) fell afterward into almost universal neglect or disuse; so that now the revival of such observances *gives* precisely the same general and unnecessary offence which the church sought to *avoid* by retaining them at first. Such things, it might be well now to alter or expunge; or there may be parts of our formularies which we may think capable of improvement in various ways, and, therefore, may wish heartily to see improved. But all this is very different from (while we profess to be members of the church) proscribing its solemn enactments, as in themselves superstitious and intolerable. It is one thing to wish to have a law changed, and another to refuse to obey it; the one is consistent with the truest loyalty, the other is rebellion.

It must be confessed, however, that something may be said in excuse for this precipitate folly on the part of the laity in our church.

An apostasy to Romanism of a large number of those to whom they had been taught to look up, came upon them suddenly like a thunder-clap. This roused them to perceive that they had long (though unaware of its existence) been surrounded by the working of a system which had prepared men's minds for so alarming a conclusion; and, startled by that conclusion, they now became as restlessly watchful and suspicious as they had been negligent before. *Wherever* they met with any thing unusual in the language or behaviour of the clergy, they were inclined to suspect it as popish; and *whatever* any Tractite teacher seemed to show any peculiar zeal for enforcing, *that* they were sure was popish.

Thus, when some new and fatal disease becomes prevalent in a country, those who do not know its exact nature, but only its deadly character, are often filled with a thousand groundless alarms, and regard every odd twinge or throb they may chance to feel in any part of their bodies as symptoms of that dreadful malady.

It was quite natural, too, that in this state of alarm men should have taken more notice of *new forms* and rules than of erroneous and strange *doctrines*, on the part of their pastors. For, in the first place, it requires much less knowledge and attention to detect a new outward observance than an erroneous statement of doctrine; and, in the second place, the Tractite teachers are apt to proceed much more warily and slowly in disseminating their doctrines among our congregations, than in the introducing of rites and ordinances. Ceremonies they are even obtrusive in forcing upon people's notice, and they seem eagerly to search the Canons and Rubrics for such rules as (through the gradual change of customs) are most likely to be peculiarly distasteful and unsuitable at the present day, that they may specially enforce these. But as for



doctrines, they take a more cautious course; feeling their way as they advance, and not committing themselves at first to any distinct statement, except when they are speaking to none but favourable hearers.

Altogether, indeed, the description which an old father of the church has given of the proceedings of the Gnostic heretics of his time would suit very well as a sketch of the Tractite policy. "If you inquire of them in good faith, they settle their faces, raise their eyebrows, and say,—‘It is a high mystery.’ If you question them closely, they prevaricate, and assert the common faith in ambiguous language. If you show that you understand them, they deny their doctrines. If you press them in argument, they put on the guise of artless simplicity. They do not commit themselves to their own disciples before they have secured them. They have the art of persuading before they teach, while truth, on the contrary, persuades by teaching, not teaches by persuasion.”\*

It is surprising, indeed, that those well-meaning but injudicious persons who are fond of dwelling upon all the good done by the Tract party in restoring discipline and opposing dissent, should not have learned by experience how much they defeat *their own* (professed) object, by raising a dread and disgust against rubrics, ordinances, and all church regulations, by *associating these in men’s minds* with Romanizing tendencies.

The scene which our church presents resembles too much what sometimes takes place in war upon occasion of a night alarm. Each party is firing upon its own troops instead of the enemy. Many of those who would oppose Romanism, are attacking our church (the greatest bulwark against Romanism) as popish; and many of those who seem desirous to work out the system of our church in its original frame and constitution, are doing their utmost to render that impossible, by denouncing *the Protestant principles* of the church, and representing its cause as the cause of ceremonies, of ignorance, of blind obedience, and of intolerance.

Travellers in Spain report that there are in that country many families of concealed Jews, who profess to be Roman Catholics, to escape the Inquisition.

Of course they cannot bring up their children from the first as Jews, since young children would be sure to betray them; so they bring them up as *ultra-strict* Roman Catholics, which both establishes their own credit, and prepares the children’s minds for what is to come, by fixing *an association with the idea of Christianity* of all that is *absurd and burdensome* in ceremonies, penances, &c. Then, when a youth has come to years of discretion, the father

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\* Tertullian contra Valentinianos: prope init.



declares himself a Jew, and the son, it is said, never fails to adopt that religion.

Now, if any one *wished* to create an association in people's minds of the frivolous, the irrational, the troublesome, the irksome, with *our church*, might he not proceed in the same manner? and would not the issue in general be to drive men out of the church, and to destroy entirely their respect for it?

And are not some actually thus proceeding, out of blindness, who really have a directly contrary intention, and who are sincere, though very injudicious, friends to our church and its institutions?

In many cases of disputes about rites and ordinances we might say, as Moses said to the angry Israelites—"Sirs, *ye are brethren*; why do ye this wrong *one to another*?" And the dispute might easily be terminated, if both parties would attend to these *timely cautions*.

I. Let those clergymen who are anxious to enforce strictly the rubrics and canons of the church be careful to disavow and condemn as earnestly and publicly as possible\* the Romanizing doctrines and practices which have come to be mixed up in men's minds with attempts to enforce the strict discipline of the church. Let them do this openly and candidly, and not (for party purposes, because for the present they seem to work with them, and to be very zealous for surplice preaching and week-day services) flatter and compliment concealed Romanists. Especially let them take heed that they give the people no just reason to suspect that they put church rules upon a par with God's laws, and neglect or forget how distinctly our own church teaches that "Christ's gospel is not a ceremonial law, (as much of Moses's law was,) but a religion to serve God, not in bondage of the figure or shadow, but in the freedom of spirit," and that even the ceremonies which it enjoins† "are retained for a discipline and order which (upon just causes) may be altered and changed, and therefore are not to be esteemed equal with God's law," and that "it is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one and utterly like, for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed, according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word."‡

II. Let them take heed that they do not so enforce the *letter* of rubrics and ordinances as to destroy the spirit of them, and so insist upon the authority of the church as to bring all ecclesiastical authorities into contempt.

One great end, for example, of rubrics and church rules, is to

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\* With some persons, their praise of the Tractites, for enforcing discipline and reviving an ecclesiastical taste, is uttered *aloud*, while their censure of them (for only corrupting doctrine) is spoken *aside*.

† Preface to Common Prayer, "*Of Ceremonies*."

‡ Art. XXXIV.



establish "an uniform and comely order." Now, when a general and long-prevailing custom has dispensed with strict adherence to some particular rule, which has been found unsuitable in practice, then, for *individual clergymen here and there* to revive the strict enforcement of that rule, is really to break uniformity, and introduce disorder. Rules long and generally departed from can never be advantageously revived but by *public authority*; and where the bishops and chief governors of the church have long sanctioned, and still continue to sanction, such a departure from the letter of the law, then, for individuals of the inferior clergy to enforce it rigidly, is, in fact, to hold up their superiors to the people as grossly careless of their duty, and neglectful of the solemn trust reposed in them.\*

There are, you know, even in civil matters, many laws in the statute-book which are marked as *obsolete*—that is, such laws as, though never formally repealed, have long ceased to be enforced, and which no court of justice would now enforce, even if called upon to do so. Now, what would be thought of a constable or justice of the peace, if he were to set about enforcing such laws as these at this time of day?

But if long disuse thus dispenses with even unrepealed laws of the state, though Parliament, which could repeal them if it would, is constantly sitting for a great part of the year, is it not (still more) reasonable to allow that laws of the church may, in a similar manner, become obsolete; since the church has, in fact, *no legislative assembly* in a condition formally to repeal such rules as have been found to be unsuitable to our times?

III. Let the clergy who are zealous for a strict enforcement of the rubrics of the church, take care that they do not defeat the objects of those rubrics by introducing *new* practices and ceremonies beyond what the church has prescribed. Indeed, *much more* mischief might easily be done by *adding* to the ceremonies which our Reformers retained, than by *omitting* some of them. Several of the ceremonies which they retained are *in themselves* matters of no very great importance; and to omit one of these would be merely a breach of rule and order. But even a single new ceremony might be *in itself* highly objectionable, as implying some wrong principle or false doctrine, and therefore the introduction of it

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\* "Where disuse [of a practice] is general, not out of contempt, but upon other reasons, and there is no admonition by superiors, but a tacit connivance, there is a presumption of a consent toward the laying aside the strict obligation of the canons respecting it. . . . There is a difference between a custom obtaining the force of a law, and a custom abating the force of a canon. In a former case, the custom must be grounded on more evident reason than is necessary for the latter, wherein the casuists allow a permission of superiors, joined with reasonable circumstances, to be sufficient."—STILLINGFLEET, *Ecclesiastical Cases*, vol. i. p. 265.



might be *much more* than merely a breach of rule and order. It is absurd, then, to suppose that the church, in laying down rules for the uniformity of public worship, intended carefully to guard against the lesser evil, of *omitting* any the least ceremony, and yet did not intend to guard against the greater, of *adding* to the ceremonies which it has enjoined.

On the other hand, let both the clergy and laity reflect, that though perhaps no one particular form of ceremony may be a matter of any great importance *in itself*, yet the breach of a rule imposed by competent authority is no slight offence, since it is to “offend against the common order of the church, to hurt the authority of the magistrate, and to wound the consciences of the weak brethren.”\*

And let all take especial care not to strengthen the hands of the enemy by hastily crying down as popish every thing in the regulations of the church which displeases them, but candidly consider the true grounds of them, and seek information upon the real character of such regulations.

We knew (to give you an instance of the rashness with which such an outcry is sometimes raised) a case, in which much disturbance was occasioned by a clergyman’s causing a person to be removed from church, who, though not intending himself to partake of the communion, chose to remain during its celebration. And not only was this man’s forcible removal treated as illegal, (which it certainly *was*,) but the attempt and desire by warning and admonition to induce him to withdraw, was stigmatized as “popish.” Now, on the contrary, in many of the Roman Catholic “masses” (as they call the communion) no one partakes of the sacrament but the priest; and, in almost all of them, the far greater part of the congregation present are mere *spectators*; and that, on their principles, reasonably enough; since they think that they can receive benefit from the mass by worshipping the host, [consecrated wafer,] and having it sacrificed for them. To confine the congregation, then, on such occasions, to communicants, would seem, on the face of it, to be rather a protest *against* Romanism, than what could fairly be called popish.

This is an instance (one out of many) of a very ignorant and unreasonable clamour. But it may be well to notice some other points, in which even well-informed and sensible persons have done much injury by blaming as “popish” certain ordinances of our church which are not justly liable to any such imputation.

It is not uncommon, for example, to hear people speak of what are called “saints’† days”—that is, the days on which the services

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\* Art. XXXIV.

† It is to be remembered that, according to Scripture usage, *all* Christians are “saints”—that is, persons solemnly set apart for the service of God. The apos-



of the church remind us of some apostle or evangelist of Christ—as if they were days *dedicated* to those holy persons, and observed in a *religious honour* of them. Now, this was so far from being the intention of the church, that it was expressly disclaimed in the very Act of Parliament which, after the Reformation, first fixed the observance of those days. After explaining the kind of observance proper for such festivals, the statute goes on to say—“The times appointed specially for the same are called holy days: not for the matter or nature either of the time or day, *nor for any of the saints’ sake* whose memories are had on those days, (for so all days and times considered are God’s creatures, and all of like holiness,) but for the nature and condition of those godly and holy works wherewith only God is to be honoured and the congregation edified, whereunto such times and days are sanctified and hallowed—this is to say, separated from all profane uses, and dedicated and appointed, *not unto any saint or creature*, but only unto God and his true worship.”—(Statute of Edward VI. 5 & 6, c. 8.)

The intention of the church, then, clearly was not to set apart those days in the way of a religious honour of the apostles and evangelists,\* but to fix those special times for bringing before our minds the good examples and inspired doctrine of those eminent servants of Christ. And accordingly you will find, that these are the things always suggested to us in the collects and services for those days; in which we are reminded to be “followers of the apostles even as they were of Christ,” and that it is upon the word of God as “once for all delivered to the saints” by them,—upon “the foundation of the apostles and prophets,”—that we are to rest, and not upon the authoritative teaching of their pretended successors.

There are, indeed, days marked in the Calendar by the names of persons never mentioned in Scripture, and of events the records of which must be sought for in fabulous or superstitious legends. And some have taken advantage of this circumstance to pretend, that our church has commended to us the examples of these men and women as eminently holy persons, and solemnly sanctioned the credibility of those events; so that all consistent members of the

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tles, &c., are therefore much more fitly described by their names of office (as, the Apostle Paul, the Evangelist Mark, &c.) by which they are *distinguished* from other Christians, than by this title “saint,” which marks only what they have *in common* with all members of the church.

\* It is sometimes said that our church observes two festivals (the Annunciation and Purification) of the Virgin Mary. But this seems an error. As for the Feast of the Annunciation, it is not to the Blessed Virgin, but to the Angel’s Message, that the collect directs our thoughts. And the other is expressly described as “The *Presentation of Christ* in the Temple, *commonly called* the Purification of St. Mary the Virgin.” The example of the Blessed Virgin is indeed a most profitable subject of meditation; but the church seems to have avoided, for obvious reasons, commemorating her by any special days set apart for that purpose.



Established Church are bound to reverence the conduct of St. Dunstan and St. Bridget, and believe in the achievements of St. George and the miraculous "invention" of the cross! Some well-meaning persons, on the other hand, who felt themselves unable to exercise so strong a faith as all this required, thought it best to cut the knot in which they were entangled, by pronouncing the Calendar of our Prayer-Books a "disgraceful relic of popery."

But had these worthy persons taken the pains of examining that very Calendar, they would have found in it sufficient proof that, whatever the church meant by those strange names, it did *not* mean to *consecrate* by them the days to which they are appended. For the church has added to the Calendar an express list of "*all* the feasts to be observed throughout the year," among which those days are not enumerated; and the statute of King Edward, before cited, sets forth that same list, declaring that these holidays shall be observed, and "*none other*."

Nor is it hard to understand the reason why names,\* now happily so strange in our ears, appear in the Calendar. The simple truth is, that the Calendar in the Prayer-Book was not at first drawn up merely for the purpose of marking the lessons and psalms, &c., to be used on every day, but to answer for what we call an ALMANAC; and, accordingly, in the old Prayer-Books, not only are the Roman *Calends*, *Nones*, and *Ides* given, (for the convenience of scholars writing and dating in Latin,) but also the position of the sun in the signs of the Zodiac, the beginning and ending of the dog-days, and even the times when the judges sat at Westminster. Now the people, before the Reformation, had been so accustomed to reckon birthdays, fairs, terms of leases, servants' wages, law sessions, &c., by the old saints' days, (as indeed we still count our terms by "Hilary" and the "Morrow of All Souls,") that it would have been greatly inconvenient if all notice of them had been expunged from that which served them as their only almanac. Accordingly, in a Latin Prayer-Book of Queen Elizabeth's time, this reason is distinctly given, and these names are said to have been added "to serve as marks of certain things, the proper seasons of which it is important to know, and which it would be inconvenient not to be made aware of."

Now, if you will bear in mind this important fact, that the Calendar was originally intended to answer the purposes of an almanac, it will help you to see your way through another difficulty also.

Some persons, you know, are highly delighted, and others deeply distressed, at finding appended to the Calendar a list of "days of

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\* Indeed, some of the words, subjoined to these days, are not *names* at all; as, "O Sapientia," which is the commencement of a hymn ("O Sapientia procedens ex ore Patris!"—"O wisdom proceeding out of the Father's mouth") sung in honour of Christ on that day.



fasting, or abstinence ;” which both parties agree in considering as an *ordinance* by our church of the religious duty of *some* special kind of abstinence from food upon those particular days, though neither party can tell *what* kind or degree of abstinence is enjoined.

One may observe, however, in the first place, that it would be an incorrect use of language, almost amounting to a contradiction, to speak of an *ordinance* which ordains nothing definite—an injunction as to a positive duty, in which no one can say what it is that is enjoined.

When the church directs what persons shall be baptized—shall be confirmed—shall receive the holy communion—no one can doubt *what* it is that he is required to do ; the appointed services being set forth, along with rubrical directions, in the Prayer-Book. And if there had been an express command given that all members of the church should fast, as a religious duty, on certain days, we should have expected (as is manifestly necessary in the case of any positive ordinance) that the details should be no less distinctly specified. For “if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?”

And, accordingly, in those churches which do retain fasting among their public ordinances, all the particulars respecting the food to be used and abstained from, and respecting the dispensations that are to be allowed, are distinctly laid down, partly by the church itself, and partly, within certain specified limits, by each bishop, from year to year, within his own diocese.

Now, the truth is, that our table of fast-days *had* reference (as one might reasonably expect) to such a distinct rule prescribing a certain fixed measure and kind of abstinence—only, it *was not properly a religious rule, but a political one*, as we shall now proceed to explain.

When King Edward VI. designed to abolish altogether the old Roman Catholic practice of abstaining from flesh-meat on certain days, a great clamour was raised by the fishing interest against that proposal. Those who are *compelled* to live on fish for a good part of the year naturally contract a dislike to it, and never eat it when they can get meat. Now, this general distaste for fish led many persons (foolishly) to suppose that, if the laws which forbade men to eat meat on Fridays, &c., were repealed, fish would almost cease to be an article of diet. And, therefore, they strenuously resisted such a measure. Experience has now, indeed, fully shown how weak were such apprehensions ; but we have undeniable proof in the Homilies how strongly they once prevailed, and what influence they had upon the legislature. “An answer” (says the Homily on Fasting, Part II.) “shall be made to a question that some may make, demanding what judgment we ought to have of such *absti-*



nences as are appointed by public order and laws made by princes, and by the authority of the magistrates, upon policy, *not respecting any religion at all in the same*. As when any realm, in consideration of the maintaining of fisher-towns bordering on the seas, and for the increase of fishermen, of whom do spring mariners to go upon the sea, to the furnishing of the navy of the realm, &c. . . . . For that such laws . . . . . *are grounded merely upon policy*, all subjects are bound in conscience to keep them by God's commandment. . . . . And in this point concerning our duties which be here dwelling in England, environed with the sea, as we be, we have great reason to take the commodities of the water, &c. . . . . And he seemeth to be too dainty an Englishman, who . . . . . will not forbear some piece of his licentious appetite upon the ordinance of his prince, with the consent of the wise of the realm——" with a great deal more to the same purpose. There is a statute, too, of Queen Elizabeth, imposing similar abstinence, which expressly enacts that whosoever shall publicly declare "that any eating of fish or forbearing of flesh, mentioned therein, is of any necessity for the saving of the soul of man, *or that it is the service of God any otherwise than as other politic laws are* and be, that then such persons shall be punished as the spreaders of false news are and ought to be."—(Act Elizb. 5.)

Now, as this abstinence was enjoined under severe penalties, it was of great importance that the people should have the means of knowing upon what days it was to be practised. A list of such days, therefore, was not only appended to the Calendar, but (for the benefit of those who could not read) the minister was required to give public notice of them every Sunday; which was the way of proclaiming such fasts to which the people had been previously accustomed. But many things, you know, are (for convenience' sake) published in church which are not properly of a religious nature; while, in this case, the coincidence of these fasting days with days set apart for purely religious purposes (as Fridays in memory of our Lord's crucifixion, &c.) seemed to render such a mode of publication the more proper, though it must be confessed that it also fostered a confusion between the *religious* and the *political* observance of them.

It is true, indeed, that "fasting" and "abstinence" are also spoken of in some of our *services*. But, if you will consider the passages in which they are mentioned, you will see that very different things are meant from that sort of fasting and abstinence which we have just explained.\*

In the collect, for example, for the first Sunday in Lent, the vir-

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\* "In precepts of abstinence, we must distinguish the sense of the church, as moral abstinence, *i. e.* subduing the flesh to the spirit; and a ritual abstinence in



tue which they instruct us to pray that we may be enabled to practise, is, “to use *such abstinence* that, our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may *ever* obey God’s motions, in righteousness and true holiness ;” which must evidently be a duty, not for a certain portion of each year, or week, but for every time alike. The abstinence and self-denial which our Reformers direct us to practise, as a *religious* duty, in the sense of resistance to *all* temptations, and patient endurance of *every* cross that may be laid upon us, and constant self-control and subjugation of the appetites, and abstinence from *every* kind of luxurious excess, is evidently not a duty to be reserved for particular days and seasons, but to be habitually practised, and wrought into the whole character.

Then, again, in the special service for Ash-Wednesday (the Communion) the penitents are described as “turning to God in *weeping, fasting, and praying* ;” where fasting is manifestly spoken of, not as a positive duty in itself, but as (like weeping) a *natural expression* of deep sorrow. And when you reflect that this solemn service was intended as a substitute for the severe discipline of the early times, (as you will see distinctly stated in the beginning of it,) and to work upon the consciences of such great offenders as the primitive church would have put to open penance, you will acknowledge that such deep and earnest humiliation would be really natural in their case. But the church plainly no more *enjoins* fasting here than it enjoins weeping, nor prescribes a measure of abstinence any more than a measure of tears.

And you will observe that it is thus also that fasting is often mentioned in Scripture, as a natural expression and accompaniment of deep sorrow. Indeed, the two ideas of *fasting* and *mourning* were so closely connected that, in the only appointment of a fast in the law of Moses, that on the day of atonement, (Lev. xxiii. 26,) abstinence from food is not expressly mentioned at all ; but the Israelites are merely directed to “afflict their souls”—that is, to keep a solemn day of mourning.

This will help you to see the force of our Lord’s question and prophecy, in Matt. ix. 15, when explaining the reason why his disciples did not, like those of John and the Pharisees, practise fasting—“Can the children of the bridechamber *mourn*” (in Mark ii. 19, the word is “*fast*”) “as long as the bridegroom is with them ? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them : and *then will they fast*.”

A wedding was, we know, a scene of especial festivity among the Jews ; with which any thing savouring of mourning, among the

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mere difference of meats, which our church lays no weight upon ; and a religious abstinence *for a greater exercise of prayer and devotion*, which our church doth particularly *recommend* at particular seasons.” STILLINGFLEET. *Cases*. Vol. I. p. 272.



bridegroom's companions [the "children of the bridechamber"] would have been inconsistent; but when the bridegroom (by which it is plain he means himself) shall be taken from them, "then," says he, "they will fast in those days."

From this passage it is plain, among other things, that neither our Lord, nor the questioners, had any thought of *self-discipline* as a legitimate purpose of "fasting," (a notion which arose several ages after;) for in *that* point of view, the disciples would have needed it while their Lord was with them as well as afterward; so that his reply would have been nothing to the purpose.

It is to be further remarked respecting this passage, that it contains no *precept* as to what his disciples were *enjoined* to do; only a *prophecy* of what *would* take place. It is, however, important to determine aright what it was that the prophecy related to;—what period is denoted by "those days;" since it was a period during which *mourning* is spoken of,—not, indeed, as a thing *commanded*, but as natural and *suitable* for Christ's disciples.

Now, some have understood by "those days" all ages of the Christian Church subsequent to the departure of Jesus in bodily person from the earth: comprehending therefore, in those days of mourning, the present, and all future time, till his triumphant return to judge the world at the last day. But this is surely to overlook, or greatly to misunderstand, his own words. For, in some of his later discourses to the disciples, recorded by John, he dwells very fully and strongly on the sorrow they will feel at the loss of their Master, which sorrow was to be succeeded by *joy*—*lasting joy*—at his return. "Because I have said, I go my way to him that sent me . . . . sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is *expedient* for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him," &c. . . . "Ye will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice, and ye will be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into *joy*; . . . and ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but *I* will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy *no man taketh* from you." (John xvi. 6 and 20.)

Now the disciples, it is true, had to spend their lives, for the most part, in trials, dangers, indignities, persecutions, and various kinds of hardship. And some have imagined that the period of "mourning" Jesus alludes to—"then shall they fast in those days"—denotes this life of suffering which awaited them after his departure in the body. But I greatly wonder that any one should so utterly overlook what is said both by himself and his apostles. It would, indeed, be very natural for an ordinary man to regard as a period of *mourning* that life of privation and hardship to which the first preachers of the gospel were subjected; but far different, and indeed contrary, was the view which *they* themselves and their



great Master took of it. The "*mourning*" he alludes to was not on account of bodily afflictions, but on account of the loss of him, their Lord: which sorrow was to be completely and finally removed; their "joy no man was to *take from them*." But as for worldly troubles and hardships, these were a kind of trial which *He* prepared them *not* to mourn for, but to endure joyfully. "Peace," says he, (John xiv.) "I leave with you; *my peace*\* I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. . . . In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And again, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and shall separate you from their company, and reproach you; . . . when they shall persecute you for righteousness' sake: . . . *rejoice* in that day, and leap for joy," &c.

And well did the apostles learn and practise, and inculcate on their converts, the lesson he had taught them. "My brethren," says the Apostle James, "count it all *joy* when ye fall into divers temptations;" i. e. trials by persecution. "They departed rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame,"† &c. "I am filled," says Paul,‡ "with comfort; I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation," &c. To the world they might appear "of all men most miserable;" but they themselves felt quite otherwise; they were "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

From these and many other passages, but much more still, from the general tone of the New Testament writers, we may plainly see that the days of "*mourning*" which our Lord alludes to, cannot have been the life of hardship which awaited the preachers of the gospel, nor could have had any reference to such outward afflictions. That time of mourning for their Lord's absence, was evidently, first, the interval of desponding sorrow between his crucifixion and his appearance after the resurrection:§ and, secondly, in a less degree, that interval of comparative loneliness, though cheered by hope,—that twilight following the darkness of despondency, and preceding the restoration of a full sunshine—the interval between the Ascension and the Day of Pentecost: when their Master was restored to them, not in body, but in spirit, as the "Comforter who should abide with them for ever."||

In other passages of Scripture again, fasting and prayer are coupled together, to describe some prolonged exercise of devotion, in which the mind was so concentrated upon religious subjects, and so engaged in earnest supplication as to admit of no interruption from any worldly matter—not even the recurrence of an ordinary meal. Such appear to have been the miraculous fasts of Moses,

\* εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν.

† 2 Cor. vii. 4.

‡ Acts v. 41.

§ See Luke, xxiv. 17.

|| The title of Paraclete, rendered in the *Gospel* of John "Comforter," is applied to Jesus in the first *Epistle*, in which our version renders it "Advocate."



Elijah, and our Lord himself. Such, in a less degree, the fasting and prayer of Anna, Cornelius, and the prophets at Antioch. And several other such cases are incidentally recorded in Scripture.

Now how far such prolonged religious exercises may be beneficial to any one, must, of course, depend upon the bodily and mental constitution of him who practises them. Only, it should be borne in mind, that as soon as the cravings of hunger become troublesome, continuing the fast will be an *impediment*, not a *help* to devotion.\* Our Lord does not seem to have felt the pangs of hunger *during* his forty days' fast. It was "afterward" that he was hungered. And when Peter (Acts x. 9) found hunger surprise him during his devotions, he *desired food to be made ready*. Nor should it be forgotten that, in warm climates, long abstinence can be borne with far less inconvenience than in cold ones.

These are cases of *voluntary* fasts; but, in other passages which are very commonly misunderstood, the sacred writers, when they speak of fasting, mean simply absence of food, or of sufficient food, or of regular meals, without any reference to a *voluntary* act, or any connection with *religion*.

Such is, for instance, the passage (Acts xxvii.) where, in the course of the narrative of the storm which Paul and his companions encountered on the voyage to Rome, it is mentioned that they had "fasted fourteen days, having taken nothing:" by which of course we must understand merely that they had taken no regular meals in all that time, but, in the midst of the unceasing terror, and exertion, and confusion, occasioned by the tempest, had only occasionally snatched a morsel of food sufficient to sustain life.

This kind of distress,—besides many others,—Paul was frequently exposed to in his many sea-voyages and land-journeys, on occasions not recorded in the book of Acts; as we learn from his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (xi. 27,) where he speaks of himself as having been "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," &c.

That the "fastings" of which he is here speaking, are of the description just mentioned, and not any kind of religious exercise, is plain from the context; as he is manifestly enumerating, not his devotional practices, but his hardships and trials. His "fastings" accordingly—amounting occasionally not merely to pain from hun-

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\* "In actions which are less material, such as pride, and envy, and blasphemy, and impenitence, and all the kinds and degrees of malice, external mortifications do so little co-operate to their cure, that oftentimes they are their greatest incentives and inflammers, and are like cordials given to cure the ague; they do their work, but bring a hot fit in its place. And besides that, great mortifiers have been soonest assaulted by the spirit of pride, we find that great fasters are naturally angry and choleric. St. Hierome found it in himself, and Ruffinus felt some of the effects of it."—BISHOP TAYLOR, *Life of Christ*, Part I. s. viii. § 17.



ger and thirst, but to distressing famine,—are mentioned, not alone with prayers and meditations, but with “perils,” and “stripes,” and “stoning.” And it is observable also that the “watchings” which he likewise mentions in the same place, have no reference to any sort of *voluntary* exercise. In our version indeed, the word corresponds with that in our Lord’s exhortation to “*watch and pray* ;” but in the original, quite different words are employed. In the exhortation to “watch (*γρηγορεῖν*) is to be *vigilant* like a sentinel; in Paul’s description of his sufferings, “watching” (*ἀγρυπνία*) means “privation of sleep,”—“want of repose.” And the same words are employed, in the same manner, when he speaks, in another place, of being “in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in *watchings*, in *fastings*.”

In the next Caution we intend to point out the deeper and graver errors of the Tract party, and to show the repugnance of their principles and practice to the teaching of our Saviour and his apostles. But do not think the time which we have spent in this and the former Caution upon matters of (themselves) less moment, misemployed. It was in such matters of comparatively little moment that the movement *began* which has carried so many over to the Church of Rome. It did not *come to* us from Rome, though it has borne so many thither. These errors and superstitions were not *imported* into England at first; but Romish-like practices and notions sprang up among us, and first a *taste* was formed, and then a *craving* came on for things of that sort; and when it was found that our church could not satisfy that craving, the customers were driven to the Roman market. They first, themselves, shaped the “image of the beast,” and then applied to the false prophet to “make it speak and live.”

It has been often observed that, by dressing a bold and high-spirited boy in a scarlet jacket, giving him a tin sword and a pop-gun to play with, and accustoming him to military parade and show, you may give him a taste for real war, and, in the end, make him a soldier. Now, something similar to this has been the case with many of those who have lately become Roman Catholics. They did not assume the Pope’s livery, *because* enlisted; but they put on his livery first, and then joined his ranks, in order that they might continue to wear it.

A debate about ceremonies, and outward rites, and points of order, may seem but a trifling thing in itself; but so are, often, to a careless observer, the first symptoms of a malignant fever; and if these be neglected, the disease will gather strength every hour, till, at last, it defies all the skill and assiduity of the physician.

Minds strongly predisposed to superstition may be compared to heavy bodies, just balanced on the verge of a precipice. The



slightest touch will send them over; and then, the greatest exertion we can make may be insufficient to arrest their fall.

Now, the plea under which this spirit of formalism and superstition first gains influence is, that it is the spirit of our CHURCH. This was the original cry of those very leaders of the Tract party, who, as soon as they had, by this pretence, gained the influence they sought for, turned round and vilified our Reformers; and are now denouncing, as the great enemy of Christ, that very church which they began with praising as his inspired interpreter!

Their first effort was to make *our church popish*, and themselves its *popes*; and, when that did not succeed, they abandoned it, and sheltered themselves in the Roman communion; which they are now endeavouring to make even more hopelessly superstitious and intolerant than they found it.

But they have left many successors among us who are still trying to play their old game of pretended *church* principles—representing their own superstitious and intolerant system as the system of our church; while too many of the dissenters are doing all they can to assist them—accepting their misrepresentations as a true picture of our church's principles, and, under that notion, holding up our church to the scorn of mankind.

How unrighteous such a proceeding is, we have now shown you. Let us add, that it is most impolitic—nay, *mad*—upon their part. The dissenters, when they act thus, are venting their rage upon their best protector; and, if they succeed, they will only succeed in putting a persecuting and superstitious church establishment in the place of a mild and liberal one. They will find, as one of themselves allowed, that “the *little finger of Rome* will be thicker than *Canterbury's loins*.”

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## No. XI.

“By their fruits ye shall know them.”

WHAT has most startled the public in the Tract movement is the discovery of its tendency Romewards. The first disciples of the “Tracts for the Times” believed that they had embarked, under the flag of the “Anglican Church,” in a safe ship and with trusty pilots, for a pleasant summer cruise around the shores of England. But soon the “Bible and Crown” disappeared from the mast-head, and the “Cross-keys” of St. Peter floated there in its place; the rudder was put about, and the ship was seen crowding all sails for the Roman port.



This has (naturally enough) alarmed many who were at first disposed for the voyage. But this is not the only, or the worst danger. The storm of doubt and uncertainty may seem "hushed" for a while; but it is only waiting "in grim repose" for the proper moment to burst upon its victims when they least expect it; and when that storm comes, the rotten vessel in which they are embarked will assuredly *go down*. It is not the gay streamers on her yards, or the gaudy paint that bedaubs her crazy timbers, or the blustering confidence of her mariners, that can then save her from destruction. Many, it is to be greatly feared, of those who have been induced, in the hopes of gaining at last a fixed and infallible faith, to go all lengths with this unhappy movement, will find, in the end, that they have flung away, bit by bit, every possible support of faith, and will arrive, not at absolute certainty, but at deplorable skepticism.

Many, again, will, under the influence of Tractite teaching, arrive more quickly still at the same conclusion. They will arrive at total infidelity without passing through Romanism. They will see at once the *tendency* of the system, and will make one jump to the end which others reach by a circuitous path. And a much greater number still will have been induced to take refuge from troublesome doubt in apathetic indifference and uninquiring acquiescence, considering that they have the authority of eminent divines for deeming reflection and investigation worse than useless—for regarding religion as altogether a matter of feeling, and for concluding that if a man keeps up a decorous outward attention to it, such as will impress the minds of the vulgar with a salutary awe, it matters little what may be his inward belief, or whether he have any at all.

For, a strong impression has been produced, and is daily on the increase, that, of that party claiming a special pre-eminence in point of *faith*, the leaders may, perhaps, many of them, have no belief in what they teach, and the multitude led, no grounds for their belief.

Nor will the existence of this impression surprise you, if you consider some obvious points that must strike every one in their teaching and the manner of it. In the first place, then, the whole tone of the chief leaders of this party seems to show a persuasion that Christianity will not stand the test of close inquiry. They deride as absurd, and censure as profane, and deprecate as hazardous, all attempts to investigate evidence; making faith not the result of evidence, but something opposed to it. One writer (for example) of this party has told us that, in answering the question, why our religion is to be believed, "the poor, ignorant, uninstructed peasant will probably come nearest to *the answer of the gospel*. He will say, 'Because I have been told so by those who are wiser and bet-



ter than myself. My parents told me so, and the clergyman of the parish told me so; and I hear the same whenever I go to church. And I put confidence in these persons because it is natural that I should trust my superiors.'” And then, after some more to the same effect, it is added, that “there is nothing to compare with the logic of such a reply, either intellectually, or morally, or religiously, in all the elaborate defences and evidences which could be produced from Paley, and Grotius, and Sumner, and Chalmers.”

And, again, we find the *antiquity* of the Christian church set forth as the only secure foundation of belief: “till another church has been established, and stood for eighteen hundred years, there can be no argument against Christianity, or against any part of the church’s doctrine, sufficient to counterbalance the argument which we now have in its favour. Testimony, if the right ground of belief, is only to be overthrown by testimony.”

Now, when we find writers, evidently of some ingenuity, deliberately declaring that the grounds on which the best educated Christians believe in their religion are far *inferior* to those which are the very same that the pagans had for maintaining *their* belief in opposition to Christianity—inferior, that is, to what is manifestly and notoriously good for nothing—we may well feel a doubt whether these writers are not, in fact, concealed infidels indulging in an ironical sneer. Certainly, an infidel could desire nothing better than to find professed Christians deprecating appeals to evidence, and resting their faith on the same ground with that of the Hindoos. For, the religion of the Hindoos has certainly lasted for not less than eighteen hundred years; and a Hindoo is told by his parents, and his priest, and all his superiors, whom it is quite “natural” for him to trust, that his religion is true; and therefore, according to such writers, has better evidence for it than “Paley, and Grotius, and Sumner, and Chalmers” can produce for the Christian religion. As for the Mohammedans, if there be any charm in the precise number of *eighteen* centuries, *they* indeed cannot, till the years of their Hejira shall amount to that sum, have exactly *that* claim to put forward. But in the meanwhile they have as good grounds (according to these writers) to go upon, as our forefathers had some centuries back; and they have the “testimony” of Mohammed as to his night journey to heaven, uncontradicted by any other witness professing to have been there at the time; and they have the admission of professed Christians that “testimony can only be overthrown by testimony!”

And one is the more shocked at such a passage as we have laid before you, when it is put forward as what comes nearest to “the answer of the gospel”—to the answer which the Apostle Peter directs us to be “ready to give to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us,”—since it is manifest that when the gos-



pel was first preached *no* Christian could have given such a reason, and that every one of his pagan neighbours might, and did.

The truth is, that this kind of (falsely called) faith, whose usurped title serves to deceive the unthinking, is precisely what is characterized in Scripture as *want* of faith. The unbelieving Jews and pagans of old were those who rejected the "many infallible proofs" which God set before them, because they had resolved to adhere, at all hazards, to the creed of their fathers, and to take the word of their chief priests or civil magistrates as decisive, and to stop their ears against all evidence, and drown reason by clamour. "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?" "We know that God spake unto Moses; but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is." "Who knoweth not that the city of Ephesus is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?" "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive and observe, being Romans." "As for this sect, we know that *everywhere* it is spoken against."

Now it may surprise some persons, at first, to find gross credulity thus described as *want* of faith. But if you will consider awhile, you will see clearly that to *disbelieve* a thing is just the same as to *believe* its opposite. To *disbelieve*, for example, the existence of such a man as Julius Cæsar, or as Napoleon Bonaparte, is to *believe* that all the stories told about them are mere fables; which surely requires much more *credulity* than to believe them true. You would think a man very credulous who could be persuaded into a belief that there is no such place as London, and no such person as the queen, because he would be—in disbelieving these things—believing what was greatly more improbable.

So also, though the terms "infidel" and "*unbeliever*," are commonly applied to one who rejects Christianity, it is plain that to *disbelieve* its divine origin, is to believe its human origin—to disbelieve that it came from God is the same thing as to believe that it came from man.

Now when a man of competent ability disbelieves that which he might (if he would consider the matter) see to be the more probable thing, and believes what is the more improbable, it is because he is influenced by some prejudice or other, which keeps him from applying his mind to the real state of the case. Such prejudices are very different in different persons. Sometimes it is love of antiquity; sometimes love of novelty; sometimes respect for authority; sometimes contempt for it; sometimes complaisance toward others; sometimes fondness for singularity, and love of opposition. Sometimes we feel that the thing proposed to us is "too good news to be true;" sometimes we shrink from believing it true because it is disagreeable. But, in all cases, these prejudices produce want



of genuine faith—that is, they keep the mind from attending calmly to the evidence, and determining, by the weight of that, first our judgment, and then our conduct.

Now, some of these prejudices may be more culpable in themselves than others; some may be feelings which it is wrong to cherish at all, and others may be, when in their right place, even highly laudable: but still, considered as prejudices obstructing rational faith, they are all culpable for the same reason, because they hinder the mind from judging according to the evidence.

In what light, then, do these writers place the apostles of Christ, when they represent them to us as saying:—"Believe *us* on our own words; but reject the authority of all other teachers. Submit yourselves implicitly to *Christian* priests, but refuse submission to any other priesthood. Let no succeeding generation call in question the traditions of its Christian ancestors. Let each receive quietly the religion handed down by its fathers: but let *this* generation act otherwise. Take up *novelty* for this once, to oblige us, and ever after adhere to *antiquity*."

It is most manifest that the writers of the New Testament never show any inclination to commend a credulous disposition *universally*. They never lay it down as a *general* rule that "men should begin with believing;" that "they should believe first and prove afterward." They never (as some persons who style themselves Christian moralists have done) commend the heathens for trusting to the legends of their mythology, or the Jewish populace for cleaving to the traditions of the elders. They never make it a *general* duty for *all* subjects to take on trust the religion which the governors and priests of their religion choose to impose. On the contrary, the Christian religion made its appearance as the common disturber of the peace of the world, which put an end to the tranquil influence of custom, authority, credulity, sentiment, and imagination; forced men upon the disagreeable task of examining evidence, searching records, and "proving all things," and arrayed, in opposite opinions, children against their parents, subjects against their princes, and the people against the priest.

Whose work, then, are those persons doing, who would persuade men that Christ's apostles nevertheless designed to make that same blind credulity the support of their religion, which had been the support of all the error and superstition of the pagan world? Is it not plain that such inconsistency on the part of the founders of our religion would convict them at once of dishonesty?

Accordingly, infidels are always glad and eager to accept\* as correct such an account of gospel faith as confounds it with credu-

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\* We have given, at the end of this Caution, in parallel columns, the words of Mr. Hume, the famous infidel, placed side by side with those of two professedly



lity; and if you point out how inconsistent it would be, in the apostles, to *require* blind submission in Christians while they *blamed* it in Jews and pagans, an infidel has, of course, a ready answer. He will say, and say truly, that almost all fanatical impostors are more or less thus inconsistent—boldly demanding from men an uninquiring submission to their own upstart sovereignty, while they despise all authority except their own. He will observe, that it is no unusual thing for him, who is the most unrelenting tyrant in his own dominions, to stir up sedition abroad among the natural subjects of another prince; and that the first teachers of Christianity may have employed inquiry, as an engine to break up the foundations of other systems, without intending that the same lever should be applied to theirs.

Thus the infidel, indeed, may answer, and with some colour of plausibility. But a professed Christian cannot decently avail himself of the same reply. “With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured unto you again,” was the warning which the Founder of Christianity gave to his disciples; and no believers in his divine mission can hold consistently that his religion stands upon an arbitrary claim to implicit faith in that one solitary instance, combined with an equally arbitrary denial of it in all others;—that, having overturned by free inquiry all other systems which rested upon such a claim, he should have designed to place his own upon the same basis.

And if we look at the matter of fact, we shall see plainly that he never had any such intention. For not only did Christianity break up existing systems by setting at naught the plea of authority in their favour, and disturbing the easy acquiescence of implicit faith, but, from the first, its teachers put forward its own claims upon the ground of *evidence*, and challenged an examination of that evidence.

We need not now remind you how frequently, all through the gospels, our Lord himself appeals to the Jewish Scriptures—to the testimony of John—to the miracles which he himself wrought, as the proper evidence of his divine mission. But the way in which the gospel *continues* to be published in the Acts of the Apostles is equally worthy of remark.

If the apostles had thought that the best way of settling the Christian religion in men’s minds was, first of all to establish their own authority as the heads of the church, and thus secure from all Christians, as such, an equally implicit dependence on all that they might teach, we should find their *authority*, as the guides of faith,

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Christian writers—one a Tractite—another belonging to a very different school—and with those of the inspired writers. Mark how well the first three agree; and how different is the language of Christ and his apostles.



put in the foremost place throughout their teaching. "Believe in *us*, the infallible guides of the Catholic Church," would have been the first grand article proposed to all men's faith. And then all other articles would have been set forth on their *authority*. But it was not thus that the apostles really proceeded. They came forward, in the first place, much rather as WITNESSES than as authoritative guides. Their character of *witnesses*, who had seen and heard the Lord, and who, therefore, could *testify* to what they had seen and heard, is plainly the foremost part in their notion of their own office; and they work miracles and appeal to Scripture not so much for the purpose of establishing their own right to deliver doctrines, as to *prove* the doctrines which they teach. "They preach," in short, "not *themselves*, but Christ Jesus to be *the Lord*, and themselves as *our servants* for Jesus' sake."

Nor is there the trace of a provision made for the subsequent propagation of their religion by other means than the statement of rational evidence: while, in this way, large provision is made. The four Gospels (not to speak now of occasional passages in the Epistles) are four distinct statements of evidence of matter-of-fact, put forward as such, and laid before the judgment of mankind; so that—except we carefully take such writings out of men's hands—we cannot, even if we would, avoid having the question of the truth of Christianity *forced* upon men's minds as a question of evidence, appealing for examination to the reader. No well-informed Christian doubts that the authors of the four Gospels wrote under the extraordinary superintendence of the Holy Spirit; yet it is not as the organs of inspiration they come forward. Their language is not—"Thus saith the Lord:" but "He that *saw it* bare witness:"—"These things were delivered unto us by those who, from the beginning, were *ministers and eye-witnesses of the word*."

And the reason for this way of proceeding is not hard to find. The sacred writers were doubtless well aware that, to a mind searching for rational evidence, their character as *witnesses and faithful relators* must be established first; that, in establishing the truth of the facts which they relate, we cannot fairly set out with assuming the inspiration of the historians; and that such a mind would indignantly spurn from it any attempt to supply defects in the proper evidence of matters-of-fact by the arrogant interposition of authority, would refuse (and rightly refuse) to listen to such language as religious teachers too often use—"Here is proof for you; but that it *is* proof, you must take on my word. Here is an argument; but don't presume to examine its validity." That they have, in fact, then, so shaped their writings as to meet this difficulty,—to avoid what the method of authority would require, and force forward what the method of examination would demand—this seems to show pretty clearly their intention that the religion which



they preached upon the ground of evidence, should be maintained and propagated also on the same ground.

Now, if the special character of the apostles of the Lord was that of “witnesses to what they had seen and heard,” and declarers of what was *immediately delivered* to them by Christ himself, it is manifest that men’s faith was grounded upon their word in a way in which it cannot be grounded upon the word of their pretended successors, who do not and cannot make any claim to this the special and foremost part of the apostolic office. And since this character of *witnesses* could belong only to men living in the *first age* of the church, and yet was the grand character of the apostolic office—these two circumstances, taken together, remove all presumption in favour of the *continuance* of such an office in the church. The faith of those who depend on the authority of *living* guides, now, is plainly quite different from the faith of the early Christians, who relied upon the testimony of the competent *witnesses* who were *then* living. While, on the contrary, *we*, who ground our faith upon the testimony of those same witnesses, preserved for us in the writings of the New Testament,—we it is that really follow the example of the early church, and are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.”

“But did not our Lord teach as *one having authority*? and is not the church to follow the example of her Master?” Yes, where his conduct is set before us as our *example*, there we are to follow it; but we are not to make those things our example which were peculiar to him.

We may follow, for instance, the example of patience which he has set us in his last sufferings; but it would be the height of impiety to pretend that we were, at the same time, following his example in “bearing the sins of many,” and “making atonement for the transgressors;” because God has nowhere promised to accept our sufferings as a propitiation for the sins of others.

But as it would be impious to usurp Christ’s office of priest without being able to show that we were (like him) “called of God,” so it is impious also to usurp his office of prophet, without being able, like him, to exhibit the credentials of a divine ambassador.

We must, then, in striving to imitate our Lord’s example, consider the circumstances under which he acted, and compare them with those under which *we* are called upon to act. For when two persons are placed in different circumstances, one of them, when seeking to take pattern from the other, may attempt this so unwisely as to depart from the model, instead of following it. The one may be acting suitably to the position *he* occupies, and the circumstances *he* is placed in, and the other—the injudicious imitator—may be acting *unsuitably* to his own. A private citizen, for



instance, who would profit by the example of some wise and good king, must do so by rightly discharging the duties of a *private* citizen: not by assuming the demeanour and functions of a sovereign. So also if a clergyman is leading what is called an *exemplary* life—that is, one which sets a good example, a layman who should so imitate him as to take upon himself the ministerial duties which pertain to the clerical profession, would, by that very act, be departing from his proposed model. And, in like manner, any one who should have received an immediate divine revelation, as a messenger from heaven, would be authorized and bound to discharge that office in a manner which would be absurdly and impiously presumptuous in one not so inspired and so sent.

Now the ground upon which our Lord rested his claim to be listened to and obeyed—the *foundation* of that “authority” with which he spake, was the display of miraculous powers. “The works,” said he, “which I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.” “If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin;” and again, “If the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes;” and, “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.”

It is evident, therefore, that if Christ’s ministers should attempt (blindly) to imitate him by assuming an authority that belongs not to *uninspired* man, they would be, in fact, departing from his example. And the people, also, if they were to admit any such groundless pretensions of fallible men, would be departing the most widely from the example of Christ’s disciples. For these disciples received the gospel, not on the bare word of human teachers, but on the evidence which God was pleased to afford—the testimony he bore to his inspired messengers, “with demonstration (as Paul expresses it) of the Holy Ghost and with power”—that is, with the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit proving the reality of their divine mission. And it is plain that a blind and credulous deference to any assumed or imagined authority of fallible men, must be as opposite to a well-grounded faith in God’s inspired and duly-accredited messengers, as the superstitious veneration of the pagans for their idols, is to the right worship of the true God.

And yet, as there is in the religions of pagans a certain degree of external, deceptive resemblance to true religion—such as that of counterfeit coin to genuine—so the usurped or fancied authority of fallible men has an outward and deceitful likeness to the legitimate authority rightfully claimed by the Son of God; and the irrational implicit submission of *their* followers resembles, at the first glance, the humble faith and obedience of those who followed Christ and his apostles. In both cases, there is a confident and resigned submission of the understanding and will to the guidance of



a supposed divine authority; even as the worshippers of Baal and of Jehovah—of Mohammed and of Christ—may be alike in reverent adoration and devoted trust, though differing in the essential point of truth or falsehood. The stamp and outward form of counterfeits and of genuine coin are alike—even *more* alike than two pieces of *gold* stamped differently; though, inwardly, the base metal and the gold differ in the real and essential point.

And so it is with false and genuine faith. They are very much alike in outward semblance. But look more closely, and you will find that they differ in this all-important point—that false faith is a rash and unreasonable submission of the will and understanding to an authority whose just claim to that submission is not established; true faith is a deliberate and rational submission to the guidance of an authority *proved* by sufficient evidence to be divine.

But “how can you expect”—will be the question urged by some, when these considerations are laid before them—“how can you expect that the mass of mankind—poor and illiterate people—should ever be made to understand the rational evidences of Christianity? Such evidences, no doubt, there are; and it may be very proper to recur to them, with educated people, whenever doubts arise that cannot be otherwise satisfied. But the lower classes must, if they are to believe at all, be trained to believe upon human authority. If you suffer *them* to question at the outset the claims of their teachers, there is an end of all submission at once.”

But those who argue thus, forget entirely that when Christianity was first set up, the gospel was (by God’s own direction) “preached to the poor” upon the ground of rational evidence; and that if the lower classes had *then* (as many of them did) stuck blindly to the teaching of their superiors—as these objectors now encourage them to do—and had refused to judge for themselves, and had shrunk from the presumption of questioning the claims of their “natural guides,” they could never have become Christians at all; since, it is evident that, in the apostles’ times, and indeed for a long time after, the majority of the “wise and learned” rejected Christianity.

Many, too, of those who speak thus of the impossibility of making the lower classes *at home* understand the evidences of Christianity,\* are very zealous to send missionaries to pagan people *abroad* to convert them to the Christian religion. Now they can hardly suppose that the mass of pagan idolaters in India, or China,

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\* After all, the best proof of the possibility of this is the matter of fact. You have now before you the *tenth* edition of a little book, *Introductory Lessons on Christian Evidences*, (John W. Parker & Son, London,) which has been found, by pretty large experience, capable of accomplishing that very thing which the persons noticed above pronounce impossible. Besides being reprinted in America, it has been, for several years, translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Welsh, German, Romain [Modern Greek], Armenian, and Polish.



or the South-Sea Islands, are better educated than the mass of our own people in these countries; nor again, that pagans can be led to reject the authority of their own priests and civil governors, and to embrace the Christian religion, without some *reason* being given them for the change.

It is true, indeed, that some heathen people really *are* so uncivilized that, if left in that rude state, it *would* be impossible to make them understand the evidences, or even the nature, of Christianity. But when intelligent missionaries have to deal with people in such a deplorable state of ignorance, they begin with endeavouring to educate them. They teach them, if necessary, the common arts of life; then open schools for young persons, whom they train up to exercise their minds; and so fit them to understand the religion which they lay before them.

Just so should we proceed at home. If there be many in these countries who are so uneducated and ignorant as to be unable to understand the evidences of their religion, even when patiently explained to them, that is a disgrace which we should try, as soon as possible, to wipe off. Give them the education which is their right as rational beings. Do not copy the example of the slave-master, who first makes and keeps his wretched victims brutes, and then alleges *that* brutal condition as an excuse for perpetuating their slavery.

“But after all,” it will be replied, “ignorant people are better off in their ignorance, than with any such imperfect education as we could give them. We *must*, indeed, argue with the heathens, because we cannot otherwise get them to change their religion. But we do not want to *convert* our own people to any new faith; and the effect of talking to them about the evidences of Christianity, or turning their thoughts to the time when it was a *new* religion, will be to raise doubts, and shake their habitual faith in it as an *unquestionable* authority.”

Perhaps so, we reply; but, if that be a good reason for leaving them without rational evidence, then we should, as far as possible, discourage them from reading—or at least from understanding—the *New Testament*; since no one who reads *that*, and reflects on what he reads, can help having his thoughts directed to the first origin of Christianity, and the way in which it was propagated by its first teachers; and it requires but a very small degree of intelligence to perceive that it cannot be reasonable to say—“You should believe what the apostles said, because they proved their authority by miracles; but that they really said these things, and really wrought such miracles, that you are to take on *our* authority without any proof at all. You, in short, are to believe just on the same grounds and after the same manner as the men did who, *you are told in this book*, crucified Jesus Christ and persecuted his apostles.”



It is quite true, however, that Christianity is open to many—and, some of them, perplexing objections; and that, thinking of it as a thing *to be proved* will naturally suggest such objections to men's minds. But who is to be blamed if such be the inevitable consequence of the constitution of things? The Almighty might (as far as we can see) have taken other means of propagating his gospel. He might (as poor mad Rousseau demanded) have written his revelation upon the sky, or engraved it, like the axioms of mathematics, upon the understanding of mankind; though, even then, it would not have been beyond the reach of cavil, since many puzzling *objections* have been brought against the first truths of mathematical and physical science. But he has *not* done so; and because *he* has not done so, we humbly conclude that it was not *fit* that it should be done; and that the way which Infinite Wisdom has chosen is, on the whole, the best.

Such evidence then as God has provided us with, we are bound to use ourselves, and lay before our brethren. For all the consequences of what *he* has been pleased to do, *we* are not responsible; but we *are* responsible for all the consequences of what *we* presume to do in altering his arrangements.

And what have been those consequences?

Men have been trained to adhere to whatever religion they were brought up in, without having, or seeking, any grounds for it, but that so they have been told; and all inquiry—all exercise of thought on religious subjects—has been discouraged. They have been exhorted to “hide under a bushel” the lamp of reason which a kind Providence has bestowed on man. And what have been the results?

Some—not a few—have listened to the idle tales of crazy enthusiasts, or crafty impostors, who gabbled unmeaning sounds, which they profanely called “the gift of tongues;” or who pretended to have discovered in a cave a new book of Scripture, called the *Book of Mormon*, and which they assured their deluded followers contains a divine revelation. And they are believed (why not?) by those who have not only never heard of any reason why *our* Scriptures should be received as containing a divine revelation, but have been taught that it is presumptuous to seek for any, and that they ought to believe whatever is told them.

Others, again, have been strongly assured that the traditions of those who call themselves “*the Catholic Church*” are of equal authority with Scripture. And this they believe *because* they are *earnestly assured* of it; which is the only ground they ever had, or conceive themselves permitted to have, for believing any thing.

Others, again, when exposed to the seduction of infidels, finding that *these* do urge something in the shape of arguments, and that they have nothing to urge on the opposite side, conclude at once



that the religion they have been taught is a fable. For they not only have been supplied by their religious instructors with no "reason for their hope," but have even been assured by them that all inquiry, and all exercise of their rational faculties on the subject, will be likely to lead to infidelity; which is, apparently, an admission that the Christian system will not stand examination.

We would earnestly entreat, therefore, any such teacher as those we have alluded to, to imagine himself confronted, at the Day of Judgment, with some of those misled people, and to consider what answer he would make if these should reproach him with the errors into which they have fallen. Let him conceive them, saying, "You have, through false and self-devised views of expediency,—in professed imitation of the sacred writers, but in real contradiction of their practice,—sent forth us, your weak brethren—*made* weaker by yourself—as "sheep among wolves," provided with the "harmlessness of the dove," but not with "the wisdom of the serpent;" unfurnished with the arms which God's gifts, of Scripture and of reason, would have supplied to us, and *purposely* left naked to the assaults of various enemies. OUR BLOOD IS ON YOUR HEAD! You must be accountable for our fall."

Thus we have laid before you some of the bitter fruits of this miserable teaching. But these are not all. We intend soon to resume the subject, and supply you with further evidence of its mischievous tendency.



See Note, p. 37.]

"Upon the whole, we may conclude that the Christian religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity; and whoever is moved by *faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."—*Hume's Essay on Miracles*, (at the end.)

\* \* we are to be censured for having "shifted the ground of our belief from testimony to argument, and from faith to reason." \* \* \*

In answering the question why our religion is to be believed, "The poor, ignorant, uninstructed peasant will probably come nearest to the answer of the gospel. He will say, Because I have been told so by those who are wiser and better than myself. My parents told me so; and the clergyman of the parish told me so; and I hear the same whenever I go to church. And I put confidence in these persons, because it is natural that I should trust my superiors. I have never had reason to suspect that they would deceive me. I hear of persons who contradict and abuse them, but they are not such persons as I would wish to follow in any other matter of life, and therefore not in religion. I was born and baptized in the church, and the Bible tells me to stay in the church, and obey its teachers; and till I have equal authority for believing that it is not the Church of Christ, as it is the Church of England, I intend to adhere to it. Now, such reasoning as this will appear to this rational age very paltry and unsatisfactory: and yet the logic is as sound as the spirit is humble. And there is nothing to compare with it, either intellectually, or morally, or religiously, in all the elaborate defences and evidences which would be produced from Paley, and Grotius, and Sumner, and Chalmers."—*British Critic*.

"The sacred writers have none of the timidity of their modern apologists. They never sue for an assent to their doctrines, but authoritatively command the acceptance of them. They denounce unbelief as guilt, and insist on faith as a virtue of the highest order. In their catholic invitations, the intellectual not less than the social distinctions of mankind, are unheeded. Every student of their writings is aware of these facts, &c. \* \* \* They presuppose that vigour of understanding may consist with feebleness of reason; and that the power of discriminating between religious truth and error does not depend chiefly on the culture or on the exercise of the mere argumentative faculty. The special patrimony of the poor and illiterate—the gospel—has been the stay of countless millions who never framed a syllogism; of the great multitudes who, before and since the birth of Grotius, have lived in the peace and died in the consolations of our faith, how small is the proportion of those whose convictions have been derived from the study of works like his. Of the numbers who have addicted themselves to such studies, how small is the proportion of those who have brought to the task either learning, or leisure, or industry, sufficient, &c. \* \* \* He who lays the foundation of his faith on such evidences will too commonly end either in yielding a credulous and therefore an infirm assent, or in reposing in a self-sufficient and far more hazardous incredulity."—*Edinburgh Review*.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed on him."

"We know that thou art a teacher sent from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him."

"If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin."

"The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."

"Him God raised up and showed him openly; not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen afore of God, even to us," &c.

"To him bear all the prophets witness."

"Be always ready to give to every one that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you," &c.



## No. XII.

“I am pure from the blood of all men ; for I have not shunned to declare unto you  
ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD.”

THOSE parallel columns printed at the end of the last Number, were meant as only a specimen. Several more might have been added, from writers, some of greater, and some of less note ; widely differing from each other in most points, yet wonderfully agreeing in the one point—that of decrying Christian evidences—wherein they disagree with the sacred writers.

Weak and credulous enthusiasts, fancying themselves inspired, of course decry every thing addressed to sober-minded rational men.

Those infidels, again, who regard *all* Christians as weak and credulous, deride the idea of their faith being founded on rational conviction.

Those, again, who are convinced of the *usefulness* of Christianity, but yet have a lurking suspicion that it will not bear inquiry, naturally deprecate inquiry, both for themselves and others.

Moreover, those who fancy themselves very exalted *philosophers*, are resolved to believe whatever they do believe on some peculiar grounds of their own,—some reasonings not intelligible to the vulgar. And they cannot endure the idea of being convinced of a religion on such evidence as would satisfy any twelve jurymen of plain sense.

Then, again, those who wish their people to believe—*besides* the truth of Christianity—a great deal *more*, which they are aware cannot be supported by like proofs—these do not like that men should acquire a *habit* of seeking and obtaining good reasons for their belief, lest they should demand the same on *all* points ; and therefore they wish them to take *all* on trust.

Thus, from different causes, men quite different from each other in many respects, are found exhibiting this strange agreement ; an agreement between the avowed opponents and the professed followers of Christianity.

But we are now immediately concerned with this dislike of rational evidence as a “fruit” of Tractite teaching. In this view we examined it in the last Caution, and found that to deprecate, as they do, the investigation of Christian evidence, is unreasonable and unscriptural. But it is a *poisonous* fruit too, and dangerous in more ways than one.

First, the mere absence of good proof, as the foundation of faith, is highly dangerous to him who is thus left without “a reason for



the hope that is in him." A faith which is based upon deliberate and rational conviction, has a life and reality that are seldom found in that languid kind of belief which springs from the mere *habit* of assenting to what is taught. Examining the evidences of Christianity brings the truths of it before us as *real facts*: it proves them to us in the same way that other facts are proved in which we are practically interested. While, on the other hand, if we are trained to receive them implicitly in a way that no other important truths of ordinary life are received, we shall be apt to assent to them with but little feeling of their reality, and with a dim, dreamy kind of belief that has small influence on practice.

And even where this is not so, there will still be the danger we pointed out in the last Caution, of adopting the most pernicious errors with the same readiness and earnestness as truth, from finding them urged upon us with the same solemnity of asseveration as the creed in which we have been trained. Nay, the chances are, that new and monstrous errors will be embraced and followed out, in such cases, with far more earnestness than old and sober truths; because the very novelty and strangeness of the *false* doctrines will stimulate the fancy and feelings more strongly than the true ones, which we were accustomed to from our childhood.

But, *secondly*, if a man has been taught that it is dangerous to *seek* for evidence, this is likely to raise a suspicion that there is no good evidence. If there be a studied avoidance, in any society, of mentioning a particular person, and a discouragement of all inquiries about him, it will raise a suspicion that he is known to be dead, or fallen into some disgrace, but that his death or misfortune is concealed. And so, if there be a general agreement in the church to suppress every question about evidence, and to frown at any allusion to that subject, this will make intelligent persons doubt whether there is really any good evidence at all to be produced.

Such *suspensions* of the hollowness of the whole system of Christianity are much more common than you might at first imagine. And the mischief is, that they are the most likely to cross the mind just then when we most need all the strength of an active faith, and just then to paralyze its powers. These suspicions may lurk unperceived, for a long time, in a corner of the mind, while all goes on quietly; but when the soul is stirred by some strong temptation to do wrong, or the pressure of some affliction which might throw one into despondency—that is just the moment when they will emerge and come to the surface. And that, you will observe, is just the most dangerous moment. Just when we are exerting all the force of our better principles to put down some rebellious appetite, or wrong desire, or faithless misgiving, the devil will come behind us and whisper:—"But, after all, the whole thing may be an imposture; and what reason have you ever seen for thinking it



otherwise?" And the effect will too often be, that faith will lose its hold, and the temptation for the time prevail.

But many people are led into the error of fancying that an irrational faith is even firmer than a rational one, by mistaking for a firm belief a firm resolution of the *will* to believe. They seem to imagine that faith can be made firm only by a sort of brute force upon the understanding, and by *brow-beating*, as it were, their own minds and those of others into implicit submission.

Now you never see traces of this kind of violence in the case of other truths which men really believe most firmly. You never hear a man protesting with great vehemence that he is convinced that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that the earth is round like a ball and not flat like a platter, and denouncing all who cannot see the proof. Good proof *satisfies* the mind of itself, and excludes reasonable doubt without any violent effort. When you are sure that the door is strong enough to keep out an intruder, you sit quietly by your fireside, and let him kick his heels against it till he is tired. But if you rushed over, and clapped your back and shoulders to the bolt, that would imply that the door is really weak, or, at least, that your faith in it is weak—that is, that you had not full confidence in its strength.

These vehement protestations, however, in matters of religion, will often impose on a man's self as well as on others; and people often persuade themselves that a dislike to evidence proceeds from a horror and disgust at the very idea of a doubt being expressed—at having their faith brought, as it were, to trial.

But, in the meanwhile, they are in effect substituting for several of these merely *apparent* doubts, one great and real doubt which pervades the whole. If a man never will have the foundations of his house examined, though there may really be no unsoundness, his family will be in a state of perpetual uneasiness; for they never can be sure that all is right. They may not actually suspect unsoundness, but they cannot be sure that there is none.

Many persons, however, seem to feel as if there must be something painful and even revolting to a pious mind, in having its attention frequently directed to the evidences of Christianity. They say that talking of its truth suggests the idea of Christianity being possibly false, which is a hateful thought, and to be banished immediately from the mind.

Now it is, indeed, of vast importance, that all distrust of the truth of Christianity should be banished from the mind; and for that very reason, it should be delightful to us to dwell upon those numerous and strong proofs of its truth which do effectually banish all such distrust, by giving us a reasonable conviction that such a religion must come from God. Whereas, to banish these thoughts by a strong effort of the will, and by violently turning away the



mind from them, is to take a course which (so far as it is successful) would serve equally to confirm us in the belief of anything, however absurd, and which is likely to increase, instead of allaying, the uneasiness of many minds.

No one, in ordinary life, considers it disagreeable to mark, and dwell on, the constantly recurring proofs of the excellent and admirable qualities of some highly valued friend—to observe how his character stands in strong contrast to that of ordinary men—and that, while experience is constantly stripping off the fair outside from vain pretenders, and detecting the wrong motives which adulterate the seeming virtue of others, his sterling excellence is made more and more striking and conspicuous every day. On the contrary, we feel that this is a delightful exercise of the mind, and the more delightful the more we are disposed to love and honour him.

Should it not, then, be also delightful to a sincere Christian to mark, in like manner, the proofs which, if he look for them, he will continually find recurring, that the religion he professes came not from man, but from God—that the Great Master whom he adores was indeed “the Way, the Truth, and the Life”—that “never man spake like this man”—and that the sacred writers who record his teaching were not mad enthusiasts, or crafty deceivers, but men who spoke in sincerity the words of truth and soberness which they learned from him? Should he not feel the liveliest pleasure in comparing his religion with those false creeds which have sprung from human fraud and folly, and observing how striking is the difference?

And so also in what is called natural theology—the proofs of the wisdom, goodness, and power of God—how delightful to a pious mind is the contemplation of the evidence which it presents! What pleasure to trace, as far as we can, the countless instances of wise contrivance which surround us in the objects of nature—the great and the small—from the fibres of an insect’s wing, to the structure of the most gigantic animals—from the minutest seed that vegetates to the loftiest trees of the forest—and to mark everywhere the work of that same Creator’s hand who has filled the universe with the monuments of his wisdom!

“Yes,” it may be said, “all this is delightful as long as the mind is fixed only on the evidence *for* religion. But what we deprecate is, taking notice of objections to Christianity. To dwell upon the arguments *against it* must surely be painful to every pious mind: and to suggest such things to others, is likely to fill them with alarm, and raise suspicions that cannot be easily allayed.”

Now, it must be confessed that it is unpleasant to hear the character of one whom we esteemed disparaged; but, where we feel



that we have sure grounds for our esteem, that displeasure is excited by the folly or baseness of his accusers, not by distrust of his integrity. We feel no alarm, in such a case, at the prospect of the most rigid scrutiny. On the contrary, our only dread is lest it should not be rigid enough. And any disgust we may experience in having to deal with the charges brought against him is greatly overbalanced by our satisfaction at finding his character pass through the fiery ordeal uninjured, and come out even brighter than before.

Now, such should also be our feeling with respect to objections to Christianity. If Christianity be, indeed, true, its advocates may safely court investigation; and we shall find (as men have found hitherto in a thousand instances) that the seeming objections will turn out in the end strong corroborations of its evidence.

“Well, but,” it is said, “though that course may be the best for well-read and skilful divines, it is better not to notice objections *generally*, for fear of alarming and unsettling the minds of plain, unlearned people, who had probably never heard of any thing of the kind. Let them continue to read their Bible without being disturbed by any doubts or suspicions that might make them uneasy.”

Now, if in some sea-chart for the use of mariners, the various rocks and shoals which a vessel has to pass in a certain voyage were to be wholly omitted, and no notice taken of them, no doubt many persons might happen to make the voyage safely, and with a comfortable feeling of security, from not knowing at all of the existence of any such dangers. But suppose some one did strike on one of these rocks, from not knowing—though the makers of the chart did—of its existence, and consequently perished in a shipwreck which he might have been taught to avoid, on whose head would his blood lie?

And again, if several voyagers came to suspect, from vague rumours, that rocks and shoals (perhaps more formidable than the real ones) did lie in their course, without any correct knowledge where they lay, or how to keep clear of them, then, so far from enjoying freedom from apprehension, they would be exposed to increased alarm, and much of it needless alarm, without being, after all, preserved from danger.

And so it is in the present case. Vague hints that learned men have objected to such and such things, and have questioned this or that, often act like an inward slow-corroding canker in the minds of some who have never read or heard any thing distinct on the subject; and who, for that very reason, are apt to imagine these objections, &c. to be much more formidable than they really are. For there are people of perverse mind, who, really possessing both learning and ingenuity, will employ these to dress up in a plausible form



something which is, in truth, perfectly silly: and the degree to which this is sometimes done, is what no one can easily conceive without actual experience and examination.

It is, therefore, often useful, in dealing even with the unlearned, to take notice of groundless and fanciful theories and interpretations, contained in books which probably most of them will never see, and which some of them, perhaps, will never even hear of; because many persons are a good deal influenced by reports, and obscure rumours, of the opinions of some supposed learned man, without knowing distinctly what they are; and are likely to be made uneasy and distrustful by being assured that this or that has been disputed, and so and so maintained, by some person of superior knowledge and talents, who has proceeded on "rational" grounds; when, perhaps, they themselves are qualified by their own plain sense to perceive how irrational these fanciful notions are, and to form a right judgment on the matters in question.

Suppose you were startled in a dark night by something that looked like a spectre in a winding-sheet, would not he who should bring a lantern, and show you that it was nothing but a white cloth hanging on a bush, give you far better encouragement than he who merely exhorted you to "look another way, keep up your heart, whistle, and pass on?"

The truth is, that multitudes are haunted by the spectres, as it were, of vague surmises and indefinite suspicions, which continue thus to haunt them, just because they *are* vague and indefinite,—because the mind has never ventured to look them boldly in the face, and put them into a shape in which reason can examine them. "Suspensions," says Bacon, "among thoughts, are like bats among birds; they fly by twilight."

Now, would it not be an act of great charity toward such persons to persuade them to cast away their unreasonable timidity, and scrutinize such objections, instead of trying to banish them by force? For though, no doubt, *some* difficulties and objections will always remain that cannot be *directly* cleared up or answered, yet the vastly greatest number of seeming objections and difficulties can be satisfactorily removed by careful examination and increased knowledge; and the experience of this will lead us to be confident that, if we could proportionately enlarge our faculties and acquirements, (which is what we may hope for in a better world,) the rest would vanish also. And, in the meanwhile, it is of great importance to know exactly what they are, lest our fancies should unduly magnify their number and weight, and also in order to make us see that they are as nothing in comparison of the still greater difficulties on the opposite side; namely, the objections which we should have to encounter, if we *rejected* Christianity.

Still, many will comfort themselves with the idea that the great



mass of mankind will quietly take their religion on trust, and believe it on the authority of the wise, and learned, and good men who teach it them. "It might be better," some will say, "if men were more enlightened; and they may now perhaps be exposed to dangers from which greater knowledge and intelligence would save them; but still they do hold the truth, and hold it firmly, on this authority—the authority of those their pastors."

Perhaps so;—but then this *authority* must be based on conviction of the *sincerity* as well as the intelligence of their teachers. If a man is ever so good in other respects, yet if it be believed, or even suspected, that he thinks it right to teach something different from his real inward sentiments, his goodness is no ground for security; and his learning and ability will only make him the more fitted for imposing on the multitude.

Now this suspicion is that which is actually fostered by the very persons we have been alluding to in the former and in the present Caution. They directly play into the hands of infidels, not only by taking away every other foundation for Christian faith except human authority, but by themselves totally subverting even this frail one, through their doctrine and practice of "Reserve"—"Economy"—"Phenakism," or "Double-doctrine."

How much of practical insincerity there had been in the management of the "Tracts for the Times" did not, indeed, fully appear till after the publication had come abruptly to an end; but those Tracts did not come to an end before they had announced principles which ought to have fully *prepared* men for the disclosures that followed.

The writer of Tracts eighty and eighty-seven, for instance, put forward pretty plainly as his view,—that the doctrines of Christianity were committed to the custody of the clergy, not in order that they might be made "fully known" to all men, but to be "dispensed" or "reserved" by them as they should see fitting. Christianity, according to him, has recognised and adopted a principle which, as he truly remarks,\* is "to be traced throughout *the heathen world* in some shape or other," of separating men into two classes, the *initiated* and the *uninitiated*; and revealing to the first—the initiated—certain important matters which are more or less kept secret from the others. And of doctrines, the plain and full statement of which might be advantageously thus "reserved" for a select class, he went on to give instances in the DIVINITY and ATONEMENT of our Lord. Men, it would seem, according to this writer, should first *qualify* themselves to make a good and reverend use of such sacred truths as these by the diligent practice of self-

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\* *Tract LXXXVII.* p. 11. The reader is strongly recommended to furnish himself with a very useful little book, the *INDEX to the Tracts for the Times.*



denial, humility, and charity, before they can be worthy receivers of a plain statement of them; and the clergy—the teachers of the church—were to be the judges when, and how far, men are thus qualified for “initiation.” And as to the generality of persons, it was left at least very doubtful whether they ever *could* be fit for having these things plainly taught them. It was suggested, on the one hand, that words and symbols and ceremonies *implying* these doctrines, might have a “most profitable practical effect upon the unlearned, like spells and incantations, *without being understood* ;”<sup>\*</sup> and, on the other, that we have many other better ways, than teaching these mysterious doctrines, for producing a religious life;—as, for example, “preaching judgment to come, natural piety, common honesty, repentance; by urging those assistances to poverty of spirit which Scripture recommends, and the church prescribes, such as fasting and alms, and the necessity of reverent and habitual prayer,”<sup>†</sup> though the preacher may “not repeat in express words the necessity of aid from that good Spirit, without whom we cannot please God.”<sup>‡</sup>

Now what would be the natural and reasonable reply of the people to teachers who *avow* such principles as these? Should it not be—“We thank you for the warning. You have disclosed your method of procedure; and that is of such a nature that no reasonable man would choose to become your disciple. He who professes the allowableness and duty of having one gospel for the mass of the people, and another for the initiated few, and is believed in *that* profession, need not wonder to find that he is thenceforward believed in *nothing* else. For when it is known that a man wears a mask, all persons will form their own conjectures as to what is under it.”

As long as a teacher avows that he keeps back an important part of his doctrine from all but a few persons, selected according to his own judgment (or that of the school or party he belongs to) of their fitness—so long there will remain reasonable room for suspecting that those *reserved* doctrines, if known, would greatly modify, or even alter altogether, the nature of his system as taught in the first instance. Nor can such suspicions be easily removed by any assurances, however solemn, on the part of the teacher, that the doctrines which he reserves do not *essentially* alter the system; since, unless we know exactly what the system is, we cannot tell what is (in his opinion) an *essential* alteration of it.

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<sup>\*</sup> “For, as *incantations* have a natural power, so that he that *understands them not, yet derives something from them*, according to the character of the sounds, whether it be to his hurt or the healing of his body or soul, so let him understand that more powerful than any incantations are the words of divine Scripture.”—Quoted, with approval, from Origen, *Tract LXXXVII.* p. 31.

<sup>†</sup> *Tract LXXXVII.* p. 51.

<sup>‡</sup> *Ibid.* p. 59.



It is sufficiently startling in the outset, for instance, to be told that it makes no essential difference in gospel faith whether men are explicitly taught the DIVINITY AND ATONEMENT OF CHRIST, or whether they receive them only in unexplained hints and symbols; and that it makes no essential difference in Christian conduct whether it be practised upon such motives as these doctrines would supply, or through “natural piety, common honesty, and dread of judgment to come, assisted by prayer and fasting!” One is naturally led to suspect that those who use such language have very different notions of what is essential in the gospel from any thing that would reasonably be supposed. Nor can we, even if we ascertained completely the whole of the private sentiments of any *one* teacher upon the subject, be sure that we have gained even a single step in removing the vail which hangs over the real inward teaching of the *school*. There may be not only a double, but a treble, and a quadruple teaching, to an indefinite extent.

*Your* teacher may be, in his turn, the disciple of another, who has not yet seen fit to *initiate* him into a full knowledge of the mysteries, which he, therefore, can only imperfectly explain to you. He who has kept *you* in the dark, may himself be kept in the dark no less by *his* instructors, as to *their* secret belief; and these, again, may be mystified in the same way by others, and so on, without limit. They may have different stages of initiation, like the Freemasons; each Order mystifying those below, and mystified by those above.

Now the suspicions which the very avowal of such a principle as that of “reserve”—the avowal on the part of the Tractite teachers that they felt themselves justified in keeping back important parts of their system as secrets only to be imparted to such as they judge “fit” for them—was fitted to excite,—these suspicions were soon further confirmed and increased by alarming disclosures of the way in which they had reduced that principle to practice. To these we shall draw your attention in the next Caution.

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## No. XIII.

“We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

A STRANGER, on hearing of men who *avowed* such a system of “double doctrine,” as we have been explaining in the last *Caution*, would, at first, wonder at their boldness, and suppose that no man of common sense and honesty would have any thing to do with



them. "Their *practice*," he would say, "of this method of 'reserve,' or whatever else they please to call it, proves them to be deficient in moral principle; and their *avowal* of the practice shows them equally deficient in prudence. *Cunning* deceivers may often be dangerous persons; but cunning deceivers do not publish their own craft, at least to those whom they are seeking to beguile. If these men (he might say) had kept their own counsel, they might have wrought much mischief; but now that they have let out their secret they cannot possibly *do* harm, however they may intend it. For, though many sell adulterated tea, and razors that will not cut, and guns that will burst, and other fraudulent impositions upon unwary customers, they don't *proclaim* such articles; nor, if they did, would any one deal with them."

Yet so it is, that thousands have been, and daily are, imposed upon by the artful practice of this same "double doctrine," though, at the same time, it is plainly avowed by the men who practise it. Thousands are daily trusting themselves implicitly to the teaching of men, who, by their own confession, do not always teach their full *inward* system to their disciples; and who themselves again may be blindly following other teachers, that, in their turn, have certain "reserved" truths also, which, if known, would greatly modify the meaning of their popular lessons. And a disciple of such teachers will sometimes be shocked and offended if any one ventures to drop a hint that his guides may be gradually drawing him on to admit conclusions which he does not now suspect, and from which he would, just at present, shrink back with aversion. "Oh, no! Some of their friends, indeed, may have dropped some *unguarded* expressions, and made statements, or encouraged practices, that are censurable—at least in the way in which they have been taken up by others. But Mr. A. and Mr. B. and Mr. C., who are the authorities that *I* follow, are *quite safe*. Prejudiced people have retailed stories of their sayings and doings, which were doubtless misunderstood and misrepresented. *I* never heard a syllable from their lips that any fair-minded person could regard as having a Romish tendency. And as for skepticism and infidelity, *that* is really too bad! It is little short of blasphemy to make such horrible insinuations against such *holy* men, who always profess the deepest reverence for sacred things, and insist on nothing more earnestly than the absolute necessity of a full and unhesitating faith." As if such things could be any guarantee of sound doctrine in the case of persons who avow their intention of putting a vail, whenever they choose, over the chief features of their system! An Eastern lady goes about with all the lower part of her face muffled up; and he would be a rash admirer who should immediately conclude that the nose and mouth must be beautiful because he sees a fine dark eye and a well-arched brow over it.



It probably is partly to the very *audacity* with which these men proceed that they owe their success with many persons. Many will think that such bold deceit as is ascribed to them must be the invention of their opponents, or that the charge is grounded upon some misapprehension of their real meaning. And, at any rate, there is a semblance of honesty in a bold avowal of any thing—even of deceit. Some outrageous liars have retrieved their character, in the eyes of many, by confessing their former lies; and gained the opportunity of practising *new* impositions upon their dupes by avowing that they had imposed upon them before. They have said, “I have been telling you hitherto a whole string of falsehoods, but now you shall hear the whole truth.” And they have found listeners simple enough to believe them.

And, out of a somewhat like simplicity, some are apt to conclude, from the apparent honesty of these men’s avowal of a “double doctrine,” that though it might be a dangerous weapon in the hands of others, it is quite safe when used by persons of such straight-forward integrity; and that, as employed by them, it is no more than such a *gradual teaching* as all sensible men acknowledge to be fit.

Hence it is that we are compelled to pursue a little further the odious task of *proving* the charge we have brought against these writers; and showing that both their doctrine and their practice are such as to make it quite unsafe to trust them as teachers.

Be assured, it is most painful to us to be compelled to convict any one, not of mere erroneous opinion, but of dishonest artifice; and this is the more painful, when those who are to be convicted are persons whom many sincere and simple-hearted Christians regard as models of piety and virtue. But when one is quite certain, as in the present case, that gross deception is being practised as to the most important matters, it becomes an absolute duty to expose it, so far as to put the unwary on their guard. If you saw any one selling articles of food, or medicines, which you knew to be adulterated with poisonous drugs, you would be a partaker of his guilt if you did not warn your neighbours against dealing with him. And the present is a similar case.

It may be thought, indeed, that when men avow, themselves, their own double dealing, this is sufficient warning to every one who comes in their way. But certain it is, that the persons we have been speaking of do obtain the confidence of some honest and well-intentioned Christians. And as it is incredible that any man of common sense, and common honesty, should trust any one whom he knew to be a deceiver, it seems evident that, notwithstanding their own avowals, they must, by some means or other, succeed in gaining credit for sincerity.

In what way this is brought about, we shall endeavour to explain



in a future Number. In the meantime, we must do our duty in exposing their disingenuousness.

In the first place, then, you will observe that the great models whom these men profess to copy are "The Fathers," as they are called—that is, the chief writers of the prevailing party in the church for about 1200 years after the apostles' time. Now, when you remember how anxiously the apostles warned Christians of the danger of being "spoiled by philosophy [the false philosophy of the heathens] and vain deceit," and of becoming "conformed to this [heathen] world;" and how they told them that, even from among their own teachers, "should men arise speaking perverse [wrong, distorted] things;" you will not be surprised to hear that the evil which they dreaded and foresaw did soon actually happen. Christians soon began to learn false principles and wrong practices from the heathens by whom they were surrounded; and to fancy that they could gain true converts to their own religion by *accommodating* it to the tastes and prejudices of "the world." And thus, as all the pagan religions had "mysteries," or secret rites, to which none but the initiated were admitted; and almost all the pagan philosophers had a "double doctrine;" so the Christian teachers soon began to bring mysteries and the double doctrine into the church. They treated the sacraments, for example, as mysteries, and carefully hid the nature of those rites from all unbaptized (or, as they called them, *uninitiated*) persons; and they concealed such doctrines of our religion as they thought most likely to give offence, from the knowledge of the ignorant and unconverted.

Now, before long, this practice of *concealment* produced very gross insincerity in the behaviour of Christian teachers; for when they were forced to say something about their "reserved" doctrines, and would not tell their true nature, they were tempted to use shifts and tricks to escape the difficulty; and, at last, to add falsehood to evasion. You may form some notion of the lengths to which some of "the Fathers" went in this way, from a few passages in their writings, which it will be proper to lay before you, not because we take any pleasure in lowering their character, but to show you from what sort of teachers the Tractites have learned their "double doctrine," and what sort of persons they venerate as guides, and call "saints" in some higher sense than ordinary Christians.

The following passage, for example, was cited with approval from Clement of Alexandria (who lived in the second century [100 years] after Christ) by Mr. Newman, then the chief leader of the Tract party, so early as 1833:—"Being ever persuaded of the omnipresence of God, the learned Christian [*literally* the Gnostic,

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\* *History of the Arians*, p. 81.



or man of knowledge] is satisfied with the approval of God, and of his own conscience. Whatever is in his mind is also upon his tongue; toward *those who are fit recipients*, both in speaking and living, he harmonizes his profession with his opinions. He both thinks and speaks the truth, *except when consideration is necessary*; and then, as a physician for the good of his patients, *he will be false, or utter a falsehood*, as the sophists say. For instance, the great apostle circumcised Timothy, while he cried out and wrote down "Circumcision availeth not," and yet, lest he should so suddenly tear his Hebrew disciples from the law as to unsettle them: accommodating himself to the Jews, he became a Jew, that he might make his gain of all. . . . Nothing, however, but his neighbour's good will lead him to do this. . . . He gives himself up for the church, for the friends whom he has begotten in the faith, for an ensample to those who have the ability to undertake the high office of a teacher—full of love to God and man; and, while he preserves the sincerity of his words, he, at the same time, displays the work of zeal for the Lord."

You perceive what a strange misconstruction this writer puts upon Paul's conduct,—as if there were any thing even apparently inconsistent between his declaring that "Circumcision availeth not" to salvation, and his circumcising Timothy! Whereas, on the contrary, it was just because he always held and taught that "*Neither* circumcision availeth any thing [to salvation], nor uncircumcision;" that, *therefore*, he circumcised Timothy (who was of Jewish descent) in order to show that he did not (as was falsely said) *forbid* the Jews to practise the customs of their nation.

Others of the Fathers go even much further than Clement, in attributing insincerity to the apostles, not as a culpable thing, but as a piece of commendable dexterity. Jerome, for instance, in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, represents Paul as practising this "economy" when he *seemed* to rebuke Peter. The apostles, according to him, perfectly understood one another, and only appeared to fall out for the sake of guarding the Gentiles against thinking that *they* were bound to observe the law of Moses. His words are—"That the pretence [of Peter] as if the law ought to be observed, which would have been injurious to the Gentile converts, might be counterbalanced by the pretence [of Paul] that he was to be blamed; and so both people [Jews and Gentiles] might be kept safe—those who approved circumcision following Peter, and those who were unwilling to undergo it, preaching up the liberty of Paul."

And in another part of the same writer's works, we find the following apology for employing falsehood in defence of religion:—

"At the same time, we say that there are different ways in which subjects have to be discussed; and, among others, one is to write



'*gymnastically*'—(*i. e.* practising like wrestlers for victory;) another, '*dogmatically*.' In the former, the disputation is indefinite, and the person replying to an adversary has to propose now one thing, now another; to argue as it suits his purpose; to say one thing, while he aims at accomplishing a different thing; *to make believe it is bread he is showing*, when, as the saying is, *it is really a stone*. In the latter, the object in view must be distinct, and a certain openness of speech is necessary. In the one, you are in quest of a result; in the other, you are laying down something; in the former, you have to strive for victory; in the latter, you have simply to teach. When I have to stand up in combat and to contend for my life, do you, as my instructor preparing me for it, say to me, 'Don't inflict a wound by a side-blow, and in a part where it is not expected by your antagonist; strike with a straightforward thrust: it is a shame for you to bring down your enemy by stratagem, and not by strength?' just as if it were not the chief art of combatants to make a feint in one direction, and to hit in another. Pray read Demosthenes; read Tully; and if you are not satisfied with the masters of rhetoric, with whom it is a point of art *to say what LOOKS LIKE TRUTH, rather than what is true*, read Plato, Theophrastus, Xenophon, Aristotle, and the rest, who have sprung from the Socratic fountain like so many streams: what is there in these that is undisguised or simple? What words that may not be used in different senses? What sense is taken except for the purpose of victory? ORIGEN, METHODIUS, EUSEBIUS, APOLLINARIS, write at great length against Celsus and Porphyry. See with what arguments, what deceptive questions, they baffle the preparations of the devil; and *because they are sometimes obliged to speak, they say—not what they think—but what is expedient*, in opposing the pagans. I say nothing of the Latin writers, TERTULLIAN, CYPRIAN, MINUTIUS, VICTORINUS, LACTANTIUS, HILARY, lest I should seem to have been accusing others, rather than defending myself."

2. Now you will observe that, as we proved in the last Caution, the Tract writers have *avowed* their approbation of those very principles of "reserve" which these "Fathers" carried out in the manner we have just seen; and (which is more) they take those principles as part of the tradition of "the Fathers," whom they regard as the "well-instructed doctors" of a better age, and men qualified to teach with authority what is the sense of the Universal Church.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the *practice* of the Tract writers has been such as their principles of reserve would naturally lead to, and the example of their great models, "the Fathers," would encourage. And such, indeed, it has been.

Take, for instance, the celebrated *Tract XC*. Throughout the earlier of the *Tracts for the Times*, the whole tenor of the *exoteric*



[outward and popular] teaching put forward in them, had been, that the Church of Rome had become fixed in dangerous error at the Council of Trent; that this "atrocious council" (as one of the Tract writers styled it) had turned what had been mere theological opinions into dogmas of that church; and that then "did the Roman communion bind itself in covenant to the cause of Antichrist." But, as time went on, it became manifest that a very different *esoteric* [inward] teaching was operating also upon the initiated; and the rash eagerness of some of these forced Mr. Newman, the great leader of the party, into what he himself admitted to be premature disclosures of the real tendency of his doctrines. There were, it seems, among his disciples, some who were inclined to follow out his principles further than he then judged it prudent to go, and who were forcing him and his colleagues "to affirm or deny what *they would fain not consider or pronounce upon.*" And, accordingly, to *prevent*—as he said—*men who held Romish doctrines from straggling toward Rome*, he endeavoured, in this Tract, to prove that one might honestly subscribe the Articles of the Church of England, and, at the same time, hold every thing laid down in the Decrees of the Council of Trent—and *that*, though the Articles were expressly drawn up to condemn the authoritative teaching of the Roman Church, and *after* the Council of Trent had held twenty-two out of its whole number of twenty-five sessions! In that famous Tract it was deliberately maintained that the Thirty-nine Articles do not, when rightly interpreted, condemn the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the invocation of saints, or the adoration of relics, or purgatory, or indulgences, as sanctioned by the Council of Trent; and that the true rule for interpreting the Articles is, not to take the words in their plain natural sense, but in such a sense—often "non-natural"—as the person signing them may think to be most in accordance with "Catholic tradition." You may well imagine that to bring the Articles to bear such a sense as what Mr. Newman thought Catholic tradition required, was a task of no little difficulty. Indeed, he set such an example of hair-splitting and wire-drawing—of shuffling equivocation and dishonest garbling of quotations—as made the English people thoroughly ashamed that any man calling himself an Englishman, a gentleman, and a clergyman, should insult their understandings and consciences with such mean sophistry. And soon after, the heads of houses at Oxford passed a solemn resolution that "modes of interpretation such as are suggested in the said Tract, *evading rather than explaining* the sense of the Thirty-nine Articles, and *reconciling subscription to them with the adoption of errors which they were designed to counteract*, defeat the objects, and are inconsistent with the due observance, of the statutes of the University." Yet, notwithstanding all this, the other chief leaders of the Tract party came forward,



without an exception, deliberately and advisedly to defend that shameful Tract from the condemnation it deserved. But this was only of a piece with their general conduct.

Nothing, for example, gave the early *Tracts for the Times* so much currency, and gained for them so well the confidence of a large portion of the public, as the strong denunciations of Romanism which the writers of them, and specially Mr. Newman, put forward. The Church of Rome was called "a lost church;" its system was styled "the papal apostasy," it was pronounced "heretical," and declared to have "bound itself by a perpetual covenant to the cause of Antichrist;" men were exhorted to "flee it as a pestilence;" and it was compared to "a demoniac," and to the devil himself; and its doctrines were condemned as "profane," "impious," "blasphemous," "gross," "monstrous," and "cruel." Such strong declarations answered their purpose but too well. After some time, indeed, they ceased to be repeated very earnestly, by Mr. Newman at least. But they stood upon record as matter of evidence; and whenever any one was startled by the Romanizing tendency of the later Tracts, then these denunciations were confidently appealed to, as convincing proof that "to oppose ultra-Protestantism,"—such was the cant of the day,—"*is not to favour Popery.*" And so they continued upon record, till Mr. Newman had no longer any purpose to serve in letting them be quoted as his sincere sentiments. After long delay, he began to make up his mind for the last step, and for determining openly to *avow* his conversion to Romanism; though, by the confession of his friends, he was, for, at least, *four years* before, "though nominally with us, a member of the Roman Communion;"\* during which four years he suffered himself to be looked up and appealed to, as the head of a party who styled themselves the only true sons of the Church of England. As the time for that avowal approached, however, he began to show those whom he expected to carry with him something more of his "inward sentiments" than they clearly understood before. And, accordingly, an *anonymous paper*—which he has since published under his own name—was inserted in a *provincial newspaper*, to explain that, in making these strong denunciations, he "*said to himself*," (though not to those who were to be deceived by them,) "I am not speaking my own words; I am but following almost a *consensus* [general agreement] of the divines of my church. They have ever used the strongest language against

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\* *English Churchman*, Oct. 16, 1845. The writer adds: "*In saying this we CHARGE HIM WITH NO DISHONESTY. His desire was to gain time for himself.*" And lower down: "But though the English church does not require them [the most wavering] positively to renounce every Roman doctrine, *she does expect that so much of it as they hold, THEY WILL HOLD TO THEMSELVES, and that while they continue with her, they will THROW THEMSELVES INTO HER SYSTEM, cordially, faithfully work it out, and, if they will, raise it higher.*"



Rome, even the most able and learned of them. *I wish to throw myself into their system. While I say what they say, I am safe.* SUCH VIEWS, TOO, ARE NECESSARY FOR OUR POSITION."

This needs no comment. But here let us just remark, with respect to some recent publications by the same person, that when he solemnly denounces Protestantism as practical infidelity, and declares his firm belief in the melting of the blood of St. Januarius, and the miraculous winking of an image in Italy, he should not be offended if we reply by the question:—"But how can we be sure that you are *sincere*? May you not be only 'throwing yourself into' the Romish system, as you once threw yourself into the Anglican—thinking yourself 'safe' in speaking, 'not your own words,' but those of your newly-chosen divines; and taking 'such views as are necessary for YOUR POSITION?'" If any one, after this fair warning, is deluded a second time by "strong language," he is deceived with his eyes open.

And all this, you will observe further, is evidence not against Mr. Newman alone, but against his colleagues also. When, for instance, at the commencement of the Tract movement, a distinguished divine came forward to suggest the very explanation of this "strong language" which now turns out to have been the true one, Dr. Pusey publicly denounced him as a slanderer of his brethren, and passed his word for the perfect sincerity of the anti-Romish tone of the early Tracts; and (what is more) he declares (what could only be known to the Searcher of hearts) that he who brought the charge *did not himself believe it*; and even after the publication of *Tract XC.*, he deliberately appealed again to this "strong language," in proof that the author of that Tract was sincere in his opposition to Rome. Nay, even after concealment was no longer possible, and when Mr. Newman had retracted his "strong language," Dr. Pusey never retracted *his*. He uttered not a syllable of regret for his uncharitable censure—not a syllable of apology for having brought forward unsound evidence—not a syllable implying the slightest blame of the man who had practised such a long, cool, calculating course of deceit. On the contrary, when Mr. Newman publicly declared his conversion, Dr. Pusey pronounced it "a judgment" on the Anglican Church for not valuing him sufficiently, and took comfort that he was "not so much gone from us, as transplanted into another part of the vineyard," expressing, at the same time, an earnest hope that the vineyard might soon be completely one—since, as he went on to say, "*it is HERESY existing more or less in US which keeps Rome from acknowledging us.*" And, in the same letter, Dr. Pusey owned that he had, for some time previous, apprehended the probable conversion of his friend to Romanism. Yet, up to the last moment, he had been publicly proclaiming his confidence that the leaders, or well-instructed dis-



ciples of the Tract party, were in no danger of going over to Rome!

4. But still larger evidence against the whole party, as a party, is furnished by a *Narrative of Events connected with the Publication of the Tracts for the Times*, put forth in 1843 by Mr. Palmer of Worcester College, Oxford. This gentleman, being alarmed at the turn which things were then manifestly taking, came forward, as he tells us, to protest "against the spirit of party." But how ill qualified he was to make such a protest appears but too plainly from his own account. It appears that he was one of a number of persons who first arranged the publication of the *Tracts for the Times* in a kind of association, the declared object of which was, "to maintain pure and inviolate the doctrines, the services, and the discipline of the church; that is, (N. B.) to withstand all change which involves the denial and suppression of doctrine, a departure from primitive practice in religious offices, or innovation upon the apostolical prerogatives, order, and commission of bishops, priests, and deacons."

Now, this was pretty well to begin with; for you see what a door *the explanation* opens. The members were pledged to oppose all change, *except* in the direction of what each might judge *Catholic antiquity*. It was something like what we call a "Highgate oath," where the proviso swallows up the engagement. However, with such "a broad and simple basis," the association went to work; the agitation was begun; and the publication of the *Tracts* commenced. They were the organs of an association—a *conspiracy* as the law would style it—of which each member lent his countenance and authority to the acts of the rest, and therefore was responsible for those acts. Yet, by Mr. Palmer's own account, scarce any care was taken to insure that the sentiments put forth were such as the conspirators\* really agreed in approving. "No particular arrangements," says he, "had been made as to the composition or revision of Tracts, their title, form, &c., when the publication of the Tracts commenced, and was continued by several of our friends, each writer printing whatever appeared to him advisable or useful, without *the formality* (!) of previous consultation with others. . . . I received these *Tracts*, which were published during my absence, and aided in their distribution at first, because *their general tendency seemed good*, though I confess that I was rather surprised at the rapidity with which they were published, *without any previous revision and consultation*; nor did it seem to me that *any caution* was exercised in avoiding language calculated to give needless offence. Circumstances had induced me to pay

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\* The very term "conspirators" is applied to them in a pamphlet by Mr. Perceval, one of themselves.



some attention to the writings of Romish and Dissenting controversialists; and it seemed clear that the *Tracts* contained *gratuitous admissions*, of which these opponents would almost certainly avail themselves."

By-and-by difficulties thickened, and the "indiscretions" of the *Tracts* became more and more glaring; and two or three times Mr. Palmer made some private and humble remonstrances in influential quarters, but without effect. Still he continued an active member of the conspiracy; till at last, as things grew from bad to worse, he ceased from taking any active share in the work. Yet even then he entered no public protest: he wished to become a sleeping partner; to withdraw from the trouble of business, without taking his name from the firm or forfeiting his share in the profits. For, along with the progress of Romanism, he saw, as he tells us, that what he calls "great ecclesiastical principles" were making great progress also; and he feared to say a word against the Romish tendency, lest he should mar the triumph of those "great ecclesiastical principles." The question seems to have been throughout one of policy: he was ready to wink at, or even encourage, error, if he thought it, on the whole, likely to do less harm than good; and he seems to have worked himself up into the belief that he was really a martyr to the truth, from suffering, by his silence, opinions to be attributed to him which he did not hold; that is, by teaching indirectly, through the *Tracts* of Mr. Newman, doctrines different from his real inward sentiments! Nay, not content with mere silent acquiescence, he came forward with most of his friends to shield even *Tract XC.* from censure; not because he thoroughly agreed with it, but because he apprehended that the censure on it "would be *represented* as a censure on church principles in general." And accordingly he sought to get up a public declaration of sympathy with the accused, and of gratitude for the services rendered to "church principles" in general, by the Tract writers!

At last, when the damage done to his party by the outrageous language of Mr. Ward in the *British Critic* forced him to disavow that writer, the line which he chose to take was, laboriously endeavouring to make out that Mr. Newman and the original Tract party were quite distinct from Mr. Ward and his friends. Yet Mr. Palmer knew very well all the time, that some of the very articles in the *British Critic*, which he made the ground of his protest, had been *highly praised* by Mr. Newman but a short time before, in the preface to a volume of his sermons; that the substance of the rest had been said by Mr. Froude, Mr. Newman, and Dr. Pusey, long before it appeared in the *British Critic*; and that none of the great leaders of the Tract party (though it was their obvious policy to disown those articles, if they could with decency) had ever expressed the slightest censure of them. Finally, Mr. Palmer's narrative was



published in 1843, and in 1845 Mr. Newman openly avowed himself a Romanist, having been, by his friend's confession, a Romanist in heart and intention *for four years previous*.

Here, then, were Mr. Palmer and his party knowingly countenancing, for ten long years, the dissemination of pernicious errors; and throwing, as far as in them lay, the youth of the Universities, and some of the most promising minds throughout England, under the influence of writers who were rapidly and effectually drawing them toward Rome; and all this, lest the interests of their party should be damaged, and any injury done to the cause of what they called "church principles."

Now, what is this but, as we said before, teaching openly, through the *Tracts*, one set of opinions, while, in private, they taught another? And what limit is there to such insincerity? We have seen to what lengths these men have already gone:—The fundamental doctrines of our Reformers have been explained away by interpreting their words in a non-natural sense, so as to allow members of our church to hold tenets the most opposite. Now, how can any one be sure that the application of the principle is arbitrarily stopped short at this point? Let any one examine, and compare together, *these non-natural interpretations*, and the language, *in reference to Christianity*, of the foreign *Transcendentalists*, who profess to believe that Christianity came from God,—in the same sense in which *every thing* comes from God;—who teach the Incarnation,—explaining to the initiated that this means the presence of the Deity; *i. e.* of the "spiritual principle" which pervades the universe—the God of pantheism—in *man, generally*, as well as in *all other* animals; and who profess a belief in man's immortality,—that is, that the *human species* will never become extinct, &c. Let any one, we say, compare together these two systems, (if, indeed, they are to be reckoned as *two*,) and say whether there is ANY GREATER VIOLENCE DONE TO THE ORDINARY SENSE OF WORDS BY THE ONE THAN BY THE OTHER; whether he, who professes himself a *Churchman* according to the one system, may not, with perfect consistency, profess himself a *Christian* according to the other. Even supposing, therefore, that all the disciples of the school in question do inwardly believe in the truth of Christianity, they cannot give any sufficient assurance that they do so.

And the exhibition of this disingenuousness is likely to endanger the faith both of those who are, and of those who are not, themselves of an honest and open disposition. Both will perceive that there is reason to doubt the sincere belief of men who are not only professed Christians,—not only celebrated as able DIVINES,—but also venerated as men of pure and holy character, even by some who do not adopt their peculiar views. And this last circumstance,—the Jesuitical tone of morality, which makes pious fraud consist-



ent with Christian virtue, excluding disingenuousness from the list of "vices"—cannot but produce a powerful effect. When men see that the sincerity with which a supposed good object is pursued is allowed to excuse insincerity in the means employed,—to excuse not only the disguise of one's own sentiments, but also the deliberate misrepresentation of an opponent's, and to justify the bringing forward of heavy charges against a certain church, which are afterward admitted not to have been, at the time, believed to be well founded,—all this cannot but tend to disparage Christianity itself (if the picture of it thus presented be supposed a faithful one) in the eyes of the scrupulously honest and guileless, in proportion to their abhorrence of all double-dealing. And those, again, of a lower tone of morality, who confine the term "vice" to intemperate sensuality and the like, will be encouraged themselves to make professions of what they do not believe, and of which they suspect their eminently virtuous leaders to believe as little.

What the real inward sentiments of these men, or any of them, are, we do not pronounce. But certain it is, that, to use words, as they do, in a non-natural sense, and to profess outwardly a great respect for, and even belief in, Christianity, discouraging at the same time all examination of its evidences, and treating it as a matter of sentiment, this is now the prevailing tone of infidelity. And a most disgusting tone it is. Surely, in so important a quarrel as that between infidels and believers, common honesty and common decency require that it should be fought out in daylight; and that the combatants should engage with their vizors up, or with some outward cognizance of the side which they espouse. Hypocrisy has been styled the "homage which vice renders to virtue;" but if virtue herself could be consulted, she would probably think the courteous custom "better honoured in the breach than the observance." And every sincere well-wisher to the cause of true Christianity would prefer a thousand times the open hostility of the old infidels to the malicious flattery of the new. This is, indeed, to betray the Son of Man with a kiss; to approach him with "bated breath and words of lowliness," that his enemies may the more securely seize their victim. Far better to bear all the fierce invective, the subtle cavilling, the wit and sarcasm of the unbelievers of the past generation, than to have our religion thus mocked with the purple robe, and hailed as sovereign, when led away to crucifixion.

In the next *Caution* we hope to notice and refute the various excuses which are commonly put forward for the principle and practice of "the double doctrine."



## No. XIV.

“We are not as [the] many who *corrupt*\* the word of God.”

“WELL,” it may be said by some, after reading our last Cautions, “individuals in the Tract party may have gone too far; and even the whole party may, as a party, be not free from blame. And, no doubt, the principle of reserve in religious teaching may be liable (as every one will admit that many good things are) to abuse. But, still, there surely is some reason in it, after all.”

“Can you believe, for instance,” it will be asked, “that the mass of the people can ever be brought to comprehend the *deeper mysteries* of theology,—the difference between the ‘eternal filiation’ of the Son and the ‘procession’ of the Holy Spirit, the consistency of the distinction of ‘persons’ with the ‘unity of substance’† in the divine nature; not to speak of points still more obscure, and which even the profoundest divines find it hard to state with precision? And yet if they cannot comprehend such matters as these, how can they be fully taught the doctrine of the Trinity?” And so of the rest.

Now, it must be granted that there are, in what is commonly called “Theology,” very many things quite beyond the comprehension of the mass of the people, and which it would be utterly idle ever to attempt to teach them. And, consequently, those who hold that this school-divinity is an essential part of the gospel, will not easily avoid being forced to allow the necessity of a “double doctrine,”—one gospel to be preached to the poor, and another studied by the learned.‡

But the truth is, that a very large part of this profound theology is nothing better than a mere jargon of words without meaning, unintelligible even to “the learned” themselves; and in respect of which the people have already this great advantage over such

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\* The word denotes properly adulteration of wine.

† By “substance” it is to be observed that hearers, unaccustomed to metaphysics, almost always understand *material substance*.

‡ Some very subtle distinctions, however, in Roman Catholic theology seem, on the one hand, *necessary*, on Romish principles, to be understood by the ignorant, and, on the other, impossible to be understood by them;—such is the difference between *Latria*, the worship due only to God; *Hyperdulia*, the worship due to the Virgin Mary; and *Dulia*, the honour given to other saints. If they say that it is no matter what mistakes are practically made in such things, as long as men *intend* to do what the church directs, this is to deny their own assertion of the necessity of infallible guidance. If the *intention* be sufficient for them, why may not the intention of doing whatever Christ directs be sufficient for Protestants, though differing among themselves as to the matter of fact—what it is that Christ does direct?



teachers,—that the people are aware of their own ignorance of these matters, while their teachers pride themselves on understanding what really cannot be understood. Sometimes, indeed, when they are pressed with objections to their own *explanations* of Scripture doctrines, divines are apt to say that these are mysteries which cannot be understood by even the most exalted intellects, and that it is impious to pry into them too curiously, or bring them to the test of reason. But then the answer is obvious,—“If you do not understand these things, why do you undertake to explain them? To every thing, indeed, which God has revealed, the deepest reverence and the lowest submission are due; but not so to *man's* explication of it. If we venture to give a *further account* of what he has said, it should, at least, be a rational and intelligible account. In short, whatever you teach us should be either what God has required us to believe (however mysterious that may be) *or else* what man can prove and see to be reasonable. But let us have no mysteries of man's making.”

But the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, &c., so far as they are really *revealed* in Scripture, may certainly be understood by men of ordinary capacities; since it was to men of ordinary capacities (for the most part) that the apostles wrote the books of the New Testament; and it is not reasonable to think that they would have deliberately laid before their readers such statements as they knew could have no meaning to those readers.

A plain man, then, at the present day, if he will consent to become a diligent and humble learner, may be brought, by good instruction, to comprehend all that was revealed, through the apostles and evangelists, to plain men in their times.

And such persons may, further, be brought to perceive, that any thing not *revealed* in Scripture, even if intelligible and true, cannot be part of the GOSPEL, since *that* was preached to the learned and unlearned alike; unless, indeed, they believe that a *further* revelation has been given to the schoolmen and divines of later ages, which sets them far above the evangelists and apostles.

Many ingenious *theories* have, indeed, from time to time, been devised and set forth, to explain and reconcile the statements of Scripture, with respect to the Trinity, the Atonement, the Divine Decrees, and other matters, on which the Bible gives us only imperfect information. On such subjects, men have taken up the hints which the sacred writers seemed to drop, and sought to follow them up, by conjecturing what the full account of the matter *may be*;\* and then they have gone on to settle that this account, which they have conjectured, *must* be the true one, because it gives

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\* In theology, what Bacon called the *idola theatri* are peculiarly apt to mislead.



what they think a satisfactory solution of much that is difficult without it; and so they have finally made their own theories a part of the gospel.

But it would be much safer, and more reasonable, to consider what is *not taught*, with respect to these matters, in Scripture, as *withheld*, doubtless, because the knowledge of it would not be suitable to our present state in this life. In such a case, it is both foolish and presumptuous to seek to pluck the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge. What Scripture has left obscure, we should be satisfied to let remain obscure, until God himself sees fit to clear it up; and, instead of looking out for theories and satisfactory accounts of "how these things can be," we should be content to say, plainly, "I do not know."\*

There is, you remember, an old proverb, that "A fool can ask more questions than a wise man can answer;" but you may very fairly, if you please, add this as a *rider* to it;—"A wise man cannot ask more questions than he will find fools *ready* to answer."

But it should have struck those learned persons who have made their own conjectural theology a part of Christ's gospel, to consider how much (according to their view) *they must have supplied of the deficiencies of Scripture*. They have told us things which, though they may be deductions from deductions, &c. from Scripture, are certainly not *taught* there; and if they would reflect on this, they might consider next, "Can it be that *we* are able and authorized thus to enlarge a divine revelation? Is there not a lie in our right hand? Have we not been making to ourselves a God 'fashioned according to the beauty of a man?'"

In respect of writers upon human science, this is all very proper. We may acknowledge, for example, Aristotle as our master in logic, or Adam Smith in political economy, or Euclid in geometry, &c., and yet go on to develope many consequences from their principles which they either purposely concealed, or did not perceive, or did not know how to explain clearly. But it cannot be allowable or safe to do this with respect to Scripture.

It is said, indeed, that all these explanations and developments are *based on Scripture*. And as truly may it be said that all the deepest works of geometers are based upon the definitions of Euclid. But it cannot be said that Euclid, therefore, either taught or knew all these theorems. And it is no less plain that many of the theological theorems that are afloat were not *taught* by the apostles. Either Paul *did not know* the solutions proposed, or they must have been among the things revealed to him in the third heaven, "which it is not lawful (possible\*) for a man to utter."

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\* "Nescire velle quæ magister optimus  
Docere non vult, erudita inscitia est."—SCALIGER.

† Οὐκ ἔστιν.



The very *satisfactoriness*, therefore, (to some minds,) of such disquisitions, ought to be a proof that the attempt is a presumptuous folly, and the result an utter failure.

It may be added, that the *analogical* language in which, necessarily, the things concerning God are spoken of in Scripture, is an additional snare to presumptuous speculators. The sacred writers instruct us upon such subjects very much as you would instruct a blind man about sight and the objects of sight, by comparing them with the other senses and their objects. Even so they describe things which we cannot fully comprehend by the analogy of things with which we are acquainted; and we must be careful, in such cases, not to press the analogy further than the purpose for which it is used by them requires. For if we interpret any analogical expression too literally, we are acting as foolishly as if we were to *dissect a statue*, in order to find out what the *inside* of a man is like. The statue was only *meant* to give us an idea of the outward form and expression of him whom it represents; and the language in which Scripture speaks of God and the things of another life, describes them only so far as we are practically concerned with them; and, therefore, we must not look, in such descriptions, for information respecting such matters as they are in themselves, and unconnected with *our* practical relations to them; any more than we should look for the inward structure of the human body in the statue or picture of a man.

The difference between *religious* knowledge, properly so called, and what may be more properly styled theological *philosophy*, may be thus illustrated. Different theories, we know, have prevailed at different times, to account for the motions of the planets,—the moon, and other heavenly bodies,—the tides, and various other subjects pertaining to natural philosophy. Several of these theories, which supplanted one another, have now become obsolete; and modern discoveries have established, on good grounds, explanations of most of these points. But the great *mass of mankind* cannot be expected to understand these explanations. There are, however, many points of daily *practical* use, which they *can* understand, and which it is needful for them to be informed upon. Accordingly, there are printed tables, (in our almanacs,) showing the times of the sun's rising and setting at each period of the year,—the appearances of the moon,—the times of eclipses,—the variations of the tides in different places, and the like. And all these are sufficiently intelligible, without any study of astronomy, even to such plain unlearned men as the shepherds who visited Jesus at Bethlehem. The practical knowledge thus conveyed involves no astronomical theory, but may be equally reconciled with the Ptolemaic or the Copernican systems of the universe. It is not the less possible, nor the less useful, for any one to know the times when



the sun gives light to this earth, even though he should not know whether it is the sun that moves, or the earth.

Now, it is just such practical knowledge as this that the Scriptures give us of the Christian dispensation. They afford practical directions, but no theory. But there is this important difference between the two cases. The human faculties could, and at length did (though it is beyond the great mass of mankind) discover the true theory of the appearances and motions of the heavenly bodies. In matters pertaining to divine revelation, on the contrary, though there must actually *be* a true theory, (since there must *be* reasons, and those known to God himself, even if hidden from every *creature*, why he proceeded in this way rather than in that,) this theory never can be *known* to us; because the whole subject is so far above the human powers, that we must have remained, but for revelation, in the darkest ignorance concerning it. Many curious and valuable truths has the world discovered by philosophy, (or, as our translators express it, “wisdom;”) but “the world” (says Paul) “by wisdom knew not *God*.” of which assertion the writings of the ancient heathen philosophers, now extant, afford sufficient proofs.

It must not, however, be inferred from any thing that has been said, that we are against the employment of reason in matters pertaining to religion, and that we would have each man read the Bible without aid from others, or reflection of his own, and adopt the notion that comes first into his mind. We should study to be wise, not *above* Scripture, but *in* Scripture; to learn, not the things which God has *concealed*, but what he has *declared*. And the most learned and able man could hardly, with a whole life’s labour, place himself perfectly on a level with the plain unlearned men whom the apostles addressed; who were familiar from childhood with customs, occurrences, places, &c. which call for much research from *us*, to gain any knowledge of.

But as for *developing* some *system* or *theory* which was not revealed *to*—or at least not revealed *by*—the apostles, a man may gain much popularity, indeed, by this kind of speculation among the unwise or unthinking, but he will mislead them and himself with this superstructure of “wood, hay, and stubble.” “Sir, in these matters,” said one of our reformers, “I am so fearful, that I dare not speak further, yea, almost none otherwise, than *as the Scripture doth as it were lead me by the hand*.”

“Well, but after all,” it may be said, “you have granted that there is some kind of knowledge intimately connected with religion that is placed beyond the reach of the mass of mankind. You grant that a life’s labour will hardly place us on a level with those to whom the Scriptures were originally addressed; and you cannot expect that the mass of mankind will devote a life’s labour to the study of the original languages of Scripture, and all the various



points of history, criticism, &c., which are requisite for the full interpretation of it. And if so, is not this acknowledging that much has been revealed to some which it would be idle to attempt to communicate to others?"

Now, this would be a very strong objection, if we said, as some fanatical persons have said, that Christians stood in no need of *instructors*; but as it is, there is really no force in it. For he who by diligent study of the original Scriptures discovers more and more of their true meaning, may and ought to lay the *result* of his studies before those who have not leisure or ability for such researches; and he may, by taking pains, do this in such a manner as to make what he teaches quite intelligible to those who could never have made those discoveries for themselves. And this seems the very purpose for which the Christian ministry was instituted. They are, or ought to be, an order of learned Christians, whose duty it is to instruct their brethren, by helping them to perceive and understand what Christ has taught to all his disciples; as we have already explained to you in Caution V., Part II, pp. 79–82.

The Scriptures, indeed, are not written in the form best suited for conveying elementary instruction in the truths of religion to plain illiterate men; because they were (for the most part\*) addressed to persons who had already received the rudiments of the faith. But they are, nevertheless, the only documents from which we can certainly discover what the apostolic teaching was. And the clergy, therefore, are bound to prove—and to prove to the satisfaction of their hearers—that the doctrines which they deliver are the doctrines of *Scripture*.

Most school-books, you know, are so drawn up, as to require, generally, the help of a teacher to make them plain and easy to learners; but after a young person has come, with the aid of his instructor, to understand a treatise upon arithmetic, or algebra, or geometry, he does not receive the propositions contained in it on the word of his teacher, but because he himself perceives them to be true. And so, though the mass of mankind may need the help of instructors to enable them to understand Scripture, yet *with* that help, they may be able ultimately to judge for themselves of the meaning of Scripture.

Indeed, those hasty and enthusiastic persons who boast their independence upon all instructors, would do well to remember *what* is that very book—the English Bible itself—from the unassisted study of which they profess to draw their knowledge of the gospel. It is a translation; for which they are indebted to the labours of the learned. And they should reflect, that a translation is really

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\* We say, "for the most part;" because they do certainly contain—as the Acts of the Apostles, for example—reports of some of the elementary teaching given to the first converts.



nothing less than an exposition of the meaning of the original, according to the best judgment of the translators. They might thus, even themselves, be brought to see the folly and groundlessness of what they say. And if they were once brought to acknowledge their need of instructors for obtaining even *any* knowledge *at all* of the meaning of the original Scriptures, they would be better prepared to avail themselves of that further aid which our church designed that its clergy should afford to its unlearned members.

For, if you will read over the office for the ordination of priests in our Prayer-Book, you will see that the clergy of our own church are a standing monument of the church's design—of the view which its founders and its Reformers took of the manner in which Scripture should be used. The clergy are members of a profession devoted by our church to the business not merely of administering the sacraments, but of “instructing out of the Scriptures the people committed to their charge.” Now, if the fathers of our church had thought a knowledge of Scripture noxious or needless to the mass of the people, they would have *left* it in the *original tongues*. If, again, they had held the church's traditions to be of equal or superior authority, they would have appointed an order of men to instruct the people in a system constructed out of *Scripture and tradition* “blended together” (as the Tractites express it) and combined into a whole. Or if, on the other hand, they had deemed the Bible a sufficient and safe guide to any one who should open it at random, and interpret and apply according to his own taste, or fancy, or convenience, any passage his eye might casually fall upon, without seeking any ordinary helps to the right understanding of it;—if this had been the view of our Reformers, they would have contented themselves with putting forth a translation of the Bible for each man to use and apply for himself, or expound to others, as he could and would, according to the “inward light” bestowed upon him; and they would have appointed *no* order of men at all, set apart by the church to the office of “instructing the people out of the Scriptures,” and therefore charged with the duty of “*diligently studying* the Scriptures, and whatever may tend to the right understanding of the same.”\*

The people, then, need instruction, and the clergy are to give it. But it is instruction in “the whole counsel of God” as revealed in Scripture,—it is this, and no less than this, that the people have a right to demand and that the clergy are bound to supply. Read over the Ordination Service for yourselves, and you will see that there hardly could be penned a more distinct protest against two dangerous extremes—the one, of supposing that the mass of mankind need no help from instructors for discovering their religion in

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\* Ordination Service : Exhortation to the Priests.



the Bible ; and the other, that the clergy are to teach,—and that, on their own authority,—only so much of Scripture doctrine as they may themselves choose to impart, or any thing else besides what is strictly *Scripture* doctrine.

“But,” it is sometimes asked, “does not Paul expressly speak of a ‘wisdom’ which he spoke only ‘among the perfect,’ (1 Cor. ii.) and of ‘strong meat’ that was unfit for ‘babes,’ (Heb. iv. 11,) and suitable only for those who were of ‘full age,’ and who had ‘their senses exercised to discern both good and evil?’—and what, after all, is this but a double doctrine and system of reserve?”

Now, in answer to this, you will observe (1) that, whatever the apostle does mean by “the wisdom” which he spoke among “the perfect”—or “the strong meat” which he did not give to “babes”—he certainly does *not* mean such essential doctrines as the Tractites would *reserve* from the great mass of Christians ; since he fully propounds such doctrines as those, in the very Epistles from which these passages are cited. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, for example, he expressly tells us that, among those who “were yet carnal,” and “whom he had fed with milk,” he “had determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and *him crucified*,” and that he “had delivered unto them *first of all* that Christ *died for our sins* ;” and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he insists largely upon the divinity of Christ, to those whom he, at the same time, declares such as “need milk and not strong meat.”

And (2) if you will consider the train of argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews carried out from the very place in which Paul expresses his intention of leaving “the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” and “going on to perfection,” (Heb. viii. 1, to chap. xi.) you will readily perceive that by “strong meat” he means the opening up of the relation between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, and reasonings drawn from the types and prophecies of the Old Testament.

Such reasonings as these, it was not, in the nature of things, *possible* for any one to follow, or feel the force of, who was not previously grounded in the first principles of Christian faith. Nor, again, would it have been wise for a religious teacher to draw men into such disquisitions, when they showed, by their conduct, that they still required *elementary* instruction, and were strangers to the spirit of Christianity. His time, in dealing with such carnal persons, would be better occupied in correcting their misapprehensions of first truths, and exhorting them to the *practice* of those duties which they already knew.

But in all this there is no *reserve* or *concealment*, any more than in the conduct of a teacher of arithmetic, who, finding his scholar ignorant of the rules of simple division, or awkward in applying



them, should choose to ground him first thoroughly in that, before he set him to work sums in compound fractions.

In short, the apostles did not *conceal* any of their doctrines from any *inquirer*; but, in communicating them, they, of course, insisted first upon those which they thought most suitable to the wants or capacities of those whom they sought to instruct; just as a teacher of any useful art or science makes no secret of it, and is ready to publish *any part* of his system to the world, though, when an ignorant person comes to him as a *learner*, he leads his scholar on step by step from easy things to difficult, until the whole is completely mastered.

Accordingly (3) you will further observe that this—the mastering of the whole of revealed truth—was the object which the apostles proposed to *all* their disciples. They never thought of “carnal” persons and “babes,” as any *permanent* class in the church; but they describe themselves as “warning *every man*, and teaching *every man* in *all wisdom*, that they may present *every man perfect in Christ Jesus*,” they exhort all to “go on to perfection:” and they treat the state of those who, “when, for the time, they ought to be *teachers*,” yet remain nothing better than “babes,” as one of fearful danger, and aggravated sin.

In truth, the attempt of the Tractites to confound their “double doctrine” with that gradual teaching which every man of sense would choose to practise in religious as well as in *every other* kind of knowledge, either springs from great confusion of thought, or is part of their “economy” and “phenakism,”—that is, what we should call, in plain English, deliberate *mystification*. “For, if it were only ‘gradual inculcation’ of religious truths that they were contending for, it would be to the private instruction of *individual* Christians their reasoning would have reference; or, at least, of *sorted* classes of individuals on the same level of capacity for religious knowledge, so far as such a sorting could be found practicable. Whereas, what they are treating throughout as the great object of their pious alarm and horror, is the *publicity* given to the sublimest truths of the gospel *in the pulpit*, and in ‘the chief places of concourse;’ where manifestly, from the mixed character of the congregations, composed of persons of every degree of spiritual capacity and moral worthiness, it would be impossible to deal out sacred knowledge by gradations exactly adapted to *each several* hearer.”\*

It is, then, the *concealment*, not the gradual inculcation of doctrine, they contend for; and accordingly they cite with approbation the rules of some of the “Fathers,” which forbid “initiated” Christians to disclose the “mysteries” of the faith to others, even when the meaning of them is importunately demanded; and require

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\* Dr. West's *Discourse on Reserve*.



men blindly to promise to believe all that they shall be taught, before they know what it is.

And, obviously with the same drift, they profanely allege in their own justification, the example of our Lord, who, on many occasions, spake unto *the multitude* in parables, and expounded those parables *only to his own disciples*. For our Lord plainly *did*, in this instance, *conceal* the meaning of his parables from "those who were without." The parables were not a first and elementary piece of instruction, and the explanation a higher and more difficult one, which could not be made intelligible without a knowledge of the first; but, on the contrary, what was spoken to the *multitude* was the thing hardest to be understood, and what was imparted to *the disciples* was the easiest; and the parable was unintelligible (except as a mere story) without a knowledge of the lesson to be drawn from it, while that lesson itself was quite intelligible without any knowledge of the parable.

But does our Saviour's example, then, afford any countenance to the doctrine of Reserve?—Unquestionably not; and for these plain reasons. *He* was a divine infallible Teacher, who first *proved* his divine infallible authority by miracles, and, upon the evidence of those miracles, called upon all who witnessed them to become his disciples; and he withheld the explanation of his parables only from those who, with such evidence before them, refused to become his disciples. *He* had a perfect right to lay down the terms upon which men were to receive any part of the revelation which he came to make; and moreover, the terms upon which he saw fit to communicate this part of his revelation were such as any one can perceive to be perfectly just and reasonable. *He concealed* the meaning of his parables only from those who, with the evidence of his miracles before them, refused to acknowledge him as a "teacher sent from God;" but to *all* who were willing to enrol themselves as his disciples, (though he must have been aware that some of these were, like Judas, "the children of perdition,") he freely imparted those explanations which he refused to the multitude.

Since, then, our Lord's conduct in this respect was the result of his being a divine infallible teacher, who had already *proved* his claims to implicit faith by the evidence of miracle, it is manifest that those who do not and cannot *prove* themselves to be, like him, infallible instructors, are guilty of profane presumption in pretending to follow his example, when they *conceal* part of his doctrine, and publish only so much as they choose themselves.

Nor, even if they *were* able to prove, as he did, a divine commission as infallible teachers of the church, would they be justified by his example in *reserving* any part of Christian knowledge from *any Christian*. For, as we have seen, our Lord expounded his parables to *all his disciples* who sought such an explanation; while it is from



Christian men—from those who are already the disciples of Jesus—that the Tractites would conceal the full explanation of some of the essential doctrines of his religion.

And further, as if to guard expressly against such an abuse of his example, and cut off all excuse from those who should dare to venture upon it, our Lord distinctly warned even the apostles themselves, who *were* infallible teachers, and able also to prove their commission by miracles, that such concealment as he practised was not to continue longer than the period of his own personal ministry—“WHAT I TELL YOU IN DARKNESS THAT SPEAK YE IN LIGHT; AND WHAT YE HEAR IN THE EAR, THAT PREACH YE UPON THE HOUSE-TOPS.” Matt. x. 27.

In truth, it is only the great Teacher—God himself—who can fitly determine what portion of religious knowledge shall, at any time, be made known to the world, or withheld from it. He was pleased (and the choice was doubtless a wise one, because it was *his* choice) gradually to make known, by inspired messengers, more and more of “the counsel of his will” to mankind, in several successive dispensations, until, at last, it was all fully published by the apostles of his Son. But he never left it to fallible *man’s* discretion to determine what should be disclosed, and what withheld: nor did he ever intrust man’s ingenuity with the office of making further developments of his revelations. He knows what portion of his truth is exactly suited for each generation of mankind;—and when and how far imperfect knowledge may be given without necessarily leading those who receive it into error. But with us it is otherwise. We are in the condition of ignorant men to whom some sage physician has imparted for the benefit of others a medicine curiously compounded according to rules of art with which we are unacquainted. Is it not madness, then, to say, that because the physician himself has formerly in his own practice, when dealing with other patients, sometimes omitted some of the ingredients of that medicine, therefore *we* are justified in leaving out some part of the compound when we please, and yet still calling it his remedy? The medicine surely may be as much changed by omitting some ingredients as by adding others.

And this consideration will help you to see the weakness of the most plausible excuse by which the Tractites seek to shelter themselves from the charge of teaching *different* religions to different classes of men. “All we do teach”—they allege—“is agreeable to Scripture; only from some we withhold *a part*; and do not teach every one *all* that is contained in Scripture.” As if this did not as effectually constitute two religions, as if they had added on something of their own!

For, by expunging or suppressing at pleasure, that which remains



may become totally different from what the religion would have been if exhibited as a whole.\*

It has been remarked that every statue existed in the block of marble from which it was carved; and that the sculptor merely *discloses* it by removing the superfluous portions;—that the Medicean Venus, for instance, has not in it a single particle which did not originally exist exactly in the same relative position as now; the artist having *added* nothing, but merely *taken away*. Yet the statue is as widely different a thing from the original block, as if something *had* been added. What should we think of a man's pleading that such an image is not contemplated in the commandment against *making* an image, because it is not "made," as if it had been moulded, or cast, out of materials *brought together* for the purpose? Should any one scruple to worship a moulded, but not a sculptured image, his scruple would not be more absurdly misplaced, than if he should hold himself bound, in his teaching, not to *add on* to Scripture any thing he did *not* believe to be scriptural, but allowed to suppress any portions of gospel-truth at his pleasure, and to exhibit to his people the remaining portions, as the whole system of their religion.

Or, again, suppose that some one undertook to give you an abstract of a merchant's account-book, would you say that he had faithfully discharged his undertaking, if he put into your hands a document containing, indeed, nothing but what was in that book, but only *omitting* the debtor-side, or the creditor-side, or setting down the shillings and pence, but not the pounds?

"But has not," it may be asked—"our Saviour himself commanded us to exercise some sort of reserve in preaching his religion?—Has he not forbidden us to 'give that which is holy to dogs, or cast pearls before swine,' and is not this recognising the very principle of the double doctrine?"

Not at all—we reply. These words give no sanction whatever to the practice of giving so much and withholding so much, of Christ's doctrine, as we think proper. They only warn us against entering into any religious *discussions* at all with those who, like uncultivated savages, for example, are utterly unable to comprehend them; or who show manifestly by their conduct that they are not seeking for truth, but only for an occasion of insulting or per-

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\* A striking instance of this may be found in a work published a few years ago, termed *Elucidations of Dr. Hampden's Lectures*; in which, by picking out a sentence here, and a half-sentence there, an impression was produced of the general tendency of the work totally different from what the work itself warranted.

Those who thus garble and misrepresent a man's expressions, in order to bring on him abhorrence and persecution from credulous bigots, may be regarded as the genuine successors of those tyrannical emperors, who used to *dress up in the skins of wild beasts* their wretched victims, the ancient Christians, and then set dogs at them to worry them to death.



secuting its professors. This, in short, is a rule which might equally be given to the teachers of *any* doctrine or art or science in the world. We might warn in the same manner, the teacher of geometry, or political economy, or of medicine, not to waste his lessons upon those who were manifestly too stupid or too ignorant to derive any benefit from them, or upon those who plainly showed that they came not to learn, but to ridicule their instructor. Yet no one would be so foolish as to say that, in giving such advice, we were making medicine or geometry "mysterious sciences," or encouraging "reserve" in teaching them.

Indeed, it is plainly not on account of the effects likely to be produced upon the "swine and dogs," that our Saviour gives this admonition, but to guard against evil results to the teacher. We are not to "*throw away* our pearls upon swine," who cannot value them; because that would be lost labour; nor to give "holy things to dogs, *lest they turn again and rend us.*"

But do not understand us as saying that there are no secrets in religion. Doubtless there are. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." But this is not a peculiarity of religion.

There are secrets in every subject of knowledge; in poetry, for instance, and painting. A poet will publish his poem; still, though that poem may be read very extensively, it will remain, in proportion nearly to its excellence, a secret to the greater number of its readers. We mean that a really good poem would remain a secret to very many intelligent persons. They would all read the same words; and if intelligent persons were asked what was the general drift and character of the poem in question, they would probably give nearly the same reply; but there are beauties and excellencies in a fine poem which can only be discerned by those who have a poetical taste. The words may present the same outline of thought to all; but it will not excite the feelings in all which it would be sure to excite in a man of real poetical taste; such a man would discern beauties altogether hidden from others. So again in painting. The artist may exhibit his painting to all,—he is far from wishing to make a secret of it,—but he well knows that even of those who could accurately understand and explain the subject of his painting, few comparatively will feel its delicate perfections, or be able to appreciate either the labour or the success of the artist. For there is a pictorial taste requisite for that, and mere general intelligence is insufficient. Thus also in religion,—there is a devotional taste. Those who possess it will enter into religion with a feeling unconceived by others. Men of ordinary intelligence will understand the great outline of doctrine; but unless they possess devotional taste, it will be to them a mere outline,—a skeleton, very correct, perhaps, but wanting life and animation. The



secret which gives it animation is "with them who feared the Lord," and in proportion as they possess this quality.

We must distinguish, then, between two classes of secrets; one thing is a secret, because those who know will not reveal it; another thing is a secret, because those to whom it is revealed cannot fully comprehend it. The latter class of secrets must always belong to religion, from the nature of the case; but this is not a peculiarity of religion.

There is, however, this difference between religion and the other kinds of knowledge we were speaking of. We cannot promise every one that he may attain a poetical taste or a pictorial taste; but religion promises that each man may be brought into a devotional taste, more or less, in proportion as he himself earnestly desires it.

We have cautioned you, in this and in the three preceding Numbers, to distrust (1) all teachers, however high their pretensions to holiness, who would persuade you to believe what you happen to be told, without having or seeking any "reason for the hope that is in you;" and (2) all those, also, who justify and practise the principle of a double doctrine; teaching something different from what they themselves inwardly believe, and then (to support one deceit by another) attempting, when censured for this, to colour over and explain away that very system of disguise and mystification which they had plainly avowed and notoriously put in practice.\*

Against these we solemnly warn you; and we shall next proceed to caution you against some other dangerous principles of the same school.

\* We were under a painful necessity, in the last Number, of exposing the way in which individuals of the leaders of the Tract party have acted on their principles of double dealing.

We suspected that facts showing this were not known to several well-meaning supporters, and even opponents, of that party. And this suspicion has been confirmed by what we have since seen in an article of a leading periodical, opposed to the Tractites, which speaks of them as persons "whose piety and sincerity it would be *blasphemous* to doubt;" as men in whom "we see 'the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, *faith*, meekness, temperance;'" as men who, *if placed in high authority in our church*, would, from "their *sincerity* and goodness, do more good than harm;" and whose "very opponents would be won to love them by the heavenly nature of their aims, and the manifest *simplicity* of their purpose!"—*Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 1852; pp. 69, 70. Now this implies great ignorance of *facts*; unless, indeed, we are to suppose, instead, ignorance of the first principles of common honesty. For how else could men be so described of whom many enjoyed, for many years before their openly joining the Church of Rome, and others are still enjoying, the revenues of our church, while holding and teaching doctrines which they themselves admit to be utterly opposed to it, and professing much that they did not believe, because they considered it "NECESSARY FOR THEIR POSITION?"



## No. XV.

Refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather  
unto godliness.

WE have been compelled to set forth very strongly, and at considerable length, in several of the foregoing Numbers, the dangerous tendency of some portions of the Tractite system, which have been by some well-disposed persons much underrated.

There are several, for instance, who, though they disapprove of the principles and practices of that school, yet consider the danger to be merely that of reviving some troublesome and unedifying ceremonies and obsolete usages, that are unsuited to the present day. They look upon the matter as little more than what Milton called Laud's disputes with the Scotch, "a mere surplice scuffle—an affair of quarter-caps and tippets." Some again apprehend, beyond this, (and with very good reason,) the danger of a tendency toward Romanism; and that tendency is, indeed, by this time, so clearly manifested before men's eyes, that the wonder is that any persons should still remain who do not see it. But the greater part of those who still continue blind to that tendency, are such as are themselves already, to a very great extent, under the influence of the system in question, and who are, therefore, reluctant to open their eyes to an unpleasant sight. But as for the danger of *infidelity*, as arising out of that system, *that* is by many, even quite unprejudiced observers, nearly overlooked. And yet it is a real and great danger.

There is most serious reason for apprehending that the leaders of the Tract party will, in the end, (without intending it,) do the work of the avowed infidel far more effectually than *he* could do it himself.

For instance, when avowed infidels, such as Hume, place Christianity on the same footing with the pagan superstitions of the Hindoos, and declare that there is no evidence of its truth that can satisfy a reasonable mind,—all these assertions will have but little weight with a man of sense. He will demand *proof* of such bold assumptions; and will not believe at once that there is no valid evidence for Christianity, merely because an *opponent* says so.

But it is quite otherwise when all this is said by persons professing to be themselves Christians,—nay, and to be men of such eminent holiness and learning, as to be authorized to look down on all who differ from them as grievously ignorant and erroneous. When such men as are praised even by their opponents\* for "Christian

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\* See note at the end of No. XIV. p. 81.



devotedness and self-sacrifice," for "manifest sincerity," and all the lovely "fruits of the Spirit," for the "heavenliness of their aim, and the simplicity of their purpose,"—when such men represent true Christian faith as consisting in belief without any reason for it, and assure us that the more any one examines evidence, the more likely he will be to "end\* by reposing in a self-sufficient and hazardous incredulity;"—mere assertions such as these are likely to have weight, when coming, not from avowed adversaries, but from professed friends.

And, again, attempts have been often made by infidels to shake the evidence of the Christian miracles; which evidence, however, has been pronounced irresistibly strong by a great majority of the most intelligent men who have really taken the pains to examine it. But it is a far more dangerous assault on those miracles to profess belief in them, and to maintain, at the same time, that there is *equal* reason to believe in the pretended miracles of the liquefying of St. Januarius's blood and a host of other childish legendary tales, which are supported by no evidence whatever.

When men, evidently not wanting in intelligence or in knowledge, profess *equally* to believe in *both* classes of miracles,—when they tell us that there is the same (or even stronger) external evidence for the idle stories of the saints, which, till lately, Roman Catholics themselves were more than half ashamed of,—as for the miracles of our blessed Lord and his apostles, most men of common sense will interpret this to mean that they disbelieve and inwardly deride *both* alike.

And that they *may* be, consistently with their own avowed principles, secret unbelievers in what they outwardly profess, is evident from their own declarations. Whatever belief or unbelief may be at the bottom of their hearts, and kept secret from the rest of the world, they have let out at least this one most important secret—that they *have* a secret.

As far, therefore, as their system prevails, no one can have any reason for trusting that the very religious teachers placed over him, do inwardly believe much, or little, or any thing at all, of the Christian religion. And such a doubt as this, combined with the declaration that Christian faith is not to be based on evidence, but that our religion is to be received, like that of the pagans, without any reason at all,—this, manifestly, has a greater tendency to produce and to foster infidelity, than all that has ever been said, or can be said, by all the avowed anti-Christians in the world.

But there is (3dly) another point worth noticing, as most dangerous to the Christian faith, in the teaching of that school we have

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\* See No. XI. p. 34, Part II.



been alluding to. It discourages the study of the Scriptures: not indeed openly and avowedly, but covertly and by implication. The diligent reading of the Scriptures may not, indeed, at once be given up; the effect may be delayed for years, or even for a whole generation; but, in the natural course of things, it will assuredly follow.

A tree which has been cut down will often retain sap enough in its trunk to throw out leaves as usual the next spring; but these apparent signs of life cannot continue long in a stem severed from the root; and, after a season or two, it will be a mere log, "without fruit, twice-dead, dried up and withered." So, those who have been long under the influence of Tractite teaching will be brought gradually more and more to regard the study of Scripture as unnecessary and even dangerous to the generality of mankind.

For (1) this is implied by the system of "Reserve;" which teaches that the doctrine of the atonement, the divinity of Christ, and other fundamental points of the gospel, should be kept back from the mass of the people. Now these doctrines are (as was pointed out in the last Caution) so plainly set forth in Paul's Epistles, that it is only by abstaining from the study of the Bible that it is *possible* to keep these doctrines out of sight. To those who have the Scriptures in their hands, it will be found that the apostles and evangelists will still preach without reserve Christ crucified; and such preaching will still be a "sweet savour of Christ in them that believe and in them that perish." We may succeed in persuading others to keep back something of the counsel of God; but as long as we permit the sacred writers to bear *their* testimony, we shall have to meet them "witnessing both to small and great," and plainly setting the whole truth before all men, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."\*

And (2) by dwelling on the necessity of "blending Scripture with tradition,"—a tradition which is only to be learned from the study of some hundred huge volumes of the works of the Fathers and the Acts of Councils of the church—the Tract party do, in fact, supersede (for all but one in a million) all thought of paying any attention to the study of Scripture. The tradition which is to be blended with Scripture is described by its very admirers as "a *vast* system, not to be comprised in a few sentences, not to be embodied in one code or treatise, but consisting of a certain body of truth, permeating the church like an atmosphere, irregular in its shape from its very profusion and exuberance; . . . . . at times melting away into legend and fable; partly written, partly unwritten, partly the interpretation, partly the supplement of Scripture,

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\* It is now the fashion with a certain school to speak of the unrestrained reading of the Scriptures alone, without aid from the authoritative teaching of the church, as likely to favour Romanism. We wish heartily that the Roman Catholic clergy could be induced to try the experiment.



partly preserved in *intellectual expressions*, partly latent in the spirit and temper of Christians; *poured to and fro in closets and upon the housetops*, in liturgies, in controversial works, in obscure fragments, in sermons.”\*

Now such a “vast system of teaching” as this, is plainly beyond the grasp of ordinary mortals; and, if so, will not men be apt to say:—“After all, Scripture is but a small part of the rule of faith; and for the rest, with which it is to be ‘*blended*,’ I *must* take the word of men more learned than myself. Now, if I must depend upon them for *that*, I may as well depend upon them for Scripture too.”—? For, if a man is to take a medicine composed of twenty ingredients, and nineteen of them he has no means of analyzing or bringing to any test, he will be likely to take the *whole* dose on the physician’s word, without putting himself to the useless trouble of examining the twentieth.

Thus the laity will soon come to take their notions of what Christianity is on the word of the clergy; who, they will take it for granted, are learned men, deeply read in the writings of the Fathers; and the clergy again, finding their statements thus readily received, will ease themselves of the trouble of examining the Fathers (or the Scriptures either) for themselves, and will be content with such representations of the teaching of both as may be recommended to them by “orthodox” authorities.

For human teaching bears the same relation to Scripture, that what is called “paper currency” does to the precious metals. Bank-notes and bills of exchange, though of no *intrinsic* value, are a very convenient circulating medium so long as they really *represent* gold or silver, and are payable in coin on the demand of the holder. But if these notes be made a legal tender, and are required to be received in payment, by the decree of the very government which issues them, and on its bare word, without being convertible into gold and silver, the result is, that those metals soon disappear, and men are cheated of their goods in exchange for worthless bits of paper.

Even so, as long as human teaching is really a *representative* of Scripture, and Scripture-proof is always ready to be given—*paid on demand*, as it were—of whatever is taught, then and then only, we are secured against the danger of having God’s word superseded by “doctrines which are commandments of men.”

And the writings of the Fathers, you will observe, even though they had all the authority which the Tractites ascribe to them, could not possibly answer *this* purpose of putting a check upon erro-

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\* Newman’s *Lectures on the Church*, p. 298. There are some sentences in this description quite beyond our reach, which we have accordingly marked with italics; but what remains is sufficient for our purpose.



neous human teaching; because they are not, like the Scriptures, accessible to the mass of mankind; nor could the laity "search the Fathers," as they may "search the Scriptures," to see whether "those things" which the clergy teach them "are so." Offering, then, to the people, proof of doctrines from the works of the Fathers—works mostly untranslated, and far too voluminous for above one person in a hundred thousand to master—is something like offering to pay a large bill of exchange in farthings, which, you know, it would be intolerably troublesome to count or carry.

The effect of such teaching, then, with the mass of those who receive it, will be, at first, that they will resign themselves entirely to the direction of their pastors.

But others of a more inquiring mind, when they find, that of the works of the ancient Christian writers a large portion is lost; some fragments, or reports of them by other writers, alone remaining;—that what *has* come down to us is so vast in amount that a life is not sufficient for the attentive study of even the chief parts of it;—that these writers are far from being agreed, on all points, with each other, or with themselves;—and that learned men again are not agreed in the interpretation of *them*; and still less agreed as to the orthodoxy of each, and the degree of weight due to his judgment on several points; nor even agreed, by some centuries, as to the degree of *antiquity* that is to make the authority of each decisive, or more or less approaching to decisive;—when they find, in short, that every thing pertaining to this appeal to the Fathers is obscure, uncertain, disputable, and actually disputed, to such a degree, that even those who are not able to read the original authors, may yet be competent to perceive how unstable a foundation they furnish;—the result will be to drive the doubting into confirmed (though perhaps secret) infidelity; and to fill with doubts the most sincerely pious, if they are anxiously desirous of truth, and unhappily have sought it from such instructors.

The Tractites, indeed, have pursued, in this matter, much the same course as with respect to miracles. As they have done their utmost to make the Scripture miracles incredible, by putting them on a level with the really incredible miracles of later times; so they are taking the most effectual way of destroying the authority of the Scriptures themselves, by sinking them to the level of a mass of *human* works, and teaching men to listen for the voice of revelation "in Scripture *and* tradition,"—for the voice of revelation (as one of them has expressed it) "wherever found, whether in Scripture or in *antiquity*."

And here, as in the former case, this conduct will do more to shake the authority of Scripture than all the attacks made by infidels directly upon it, ever have done, or ever can do. For Scripture is, in itself, invulnerable; and they who attack it, do but dash



themselves to pieces against a rock. But it may easily be shown that “the Fathers of the church” are mere human teachers, who often deliver false, and sometimes even absurd things, as true doctrine. To encumber Christianity, therefore, with the defence of *their* errors and absurdities,—and make *that* essential to the safety of our religion,—is voluntarily to exchange an impregnable fortress for a position which cannot be maintained against the enemy. And when the real character of “traditionary revelation” is discovered, and when it is seen that intelligent persons, and professed friends of Christianity, place it upon a level with Scripture revelation,—demand practically the same submission to both,—and declare that both stand on the same ground, and that it is inconsistent conduct to receive the one and reject the other;—men will be apt to suspect that such persons must mean by “revelation” something quite different from what one would at first suppose, and that they look upon the Bible as in no other sense *inspired* than as all good and edifying books may be said to be.

And this impression will be much confirmed by observing in how large a way the leaders of the Tract party use the word “inspiration.”

They speak, for example, of the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, as *inspired*; and suggest that those who made it were supernaturally directed in some cases to give *wrong* translations of the Hebrew, so that “even in those places where their version swerved from the Hebrew verity, there was a special *providential design* in such variation.”\* They speak, also, of the Romish Missal, (or Liturgy of St. Peter, as they call it,) as an *inspired* piece: and yet they regard King Edward’s First English Prayer-Book, in which that Liturgy was mutilated and altered, as composed under the special direction of the Holy Spirit; and so, of all the subsequent alterations of the Prayer-Book, “ordered by the *same Spirit*, under whose control the first rites of Catholic worship were ordained.” And yet they call the Prayer-Book, in its present state, a “heavenly and divine guide, dwelling among us.”† Yet, after all, it is manifest that these same persons think very meanly of this very book as a whole.

“The present Book of Common Prayer, which they pronounce divine, was altered from the first book of Edward, which they commend, beyond measure, as supereminently divine. They acknowledge that there is a great falling off from this original, which itself was open to objections; that the changes introduced, far from being improvements, were greatly for the worse, and effected under evil influences. They acknowledge that Archbishop Cranmer,—whom they designate a time-server,—by whose authority the first book

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\* Tract 89, p. 20.

† Tract 86, p. 63.



of Edward was altered, was overruled on the occasion by some violent Reformers from the continent by whom he was surrounded; men, who, in their opposition to popery, went into extremes; who, in eradicating the tares, rooted up the wheat also; and who, yielding to their ultra-reform propensities, in the rejection of palpable errors and abuses opposed themselves to the true doctrine of the church, the sacrifice, and the sacraments. The result was, that the first inspired book of Edward, being altered by heretical influence, was stripped of a considerable portion of its orthodoxy, and, if not absolutely infected with, received an alarming dash of heretical pravity; which evil, thus increased, and still increasing in magnitude, remains to the present day. If such, in reality, be the nature of the Common Prayer-Book; if it be the production of double dealing, of truckling to error; if it be nothing better than the first reformed Liturgy filched of its orthodoxy and inoculated with heresy; if it be, as the Tract writers acknowledge, a deterioration of divine worship and an encroachment on divine truth; to make it, notwithstanding, a work of inspiration, is a manifest burlesque on the operation of the Divine Spirit; and is just as absurd as to maintain the inspiration of Robinson Crusoe, or the Fairy Tales.”\*

Robinson Crusoe, or the Arabian Nights, might, with a little ingenuity, be easily turned into allegories about religion; and then a person who did not scruple using words in “a peculiar sense” might speak of them as “divinely inspired,”—meaning that they *might be made* to afford religious instruction, and *were providentially* so written as to be capable of that particular application, though it was never intended by the writers. And people will be apt to suspect that those who speak of “the whole Bible” as “one

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\* *Dissertation*, appended to DR. CROLY’S *Index to Tracts for the Times*, pp. 35, 36. The statements referred to by him are to be found throughout Tracts 31 and 86; the latter of which is indeed, from first to last, little more than an exposition of the havoc made by our Reformers, at the instigation of Calvin, Bucer, Peter Martyr, &c., in the ancient Missal, with the assurance continually repeated, that, mysterious as it may seem, *all was for the best*. The mangled body of the Liturgy of St. Peter is paraded before the reader—each mutilation is shown to have struck off some important Christian privilege; but then, it is added, we *deserved* to lose them. How? By not sufficiently *valuing* the system at which the Reformers aimed their blows! And this was called teaching men to reverence the Prayer-Book,—much in the same way as Antony taught the Roman people to reverence those “honourable men” who murdered Cæsar—

Look! in this place ran Cassius’ dagger through:  
See what a rent the envious Casca made:  
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed;  
And, as he plucked his cursed steel away,  
Mark how the blood of Cæsar followed it.

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But they are *wise and honourable* men,  
And will, no doubt, with reasons answer you.



great parable," not to be expounded by the same rules of criticism as other books, but mystically and allegorically, even in the plainest narratives and arguments; and as having as many meanings as a "pious" fancy can find for its words;—do in reality entertain at bottom much the same opinion of Scripture as of Robinson Crusoe or the Arabian Nights. For any book at all may be made to yield a profitable meaning, if we ourselves first *put that meaning* into it, and choose to consider it as "a great parable" of something that we have not learned from it, but have known already by some other means.

IV. The earnestness again with which these writers deprecate "private judgment"\* has a similar tendency.

For, waiving all considerations as to the *right*, and as to the *duty*, of private judgment, it must be evident to all who are not incapable of reasoning, that there is an unavoidable *necessity* of private judgment on any subject wherein we *take any serious interest*. The responsibility is one which, however unfit we may deem ourselves to bear it, we cannot possibly get rid of. The fallacy which often misleads men in this matter, is, that we *can* refrain from exercising private judgment on *this or that particular point*, by *transferring* our judgment to some *other point*. For instance, a man distrusting his own knowledge of medicine, may refrain from exercising any judgment as to the remedies he should use, and may put himself wholly in the hands of a physician: that is, he *judges* that a physician is needful, and that such and such a practitioner is worthy of confidence. Or, supposing he distrusts his own judgment on *this point* also, then he consults some friend whom he *judges* to be trustworthy, as to what physician he shall employ. In one way, or else in another, he *cannot but* exercise private judgment. And it is the same in all matters; except those in which we *take no interest*, and which do not occupy our thoughts. In most of the causes, for instance, that are tried in a court of justice, we do not trouble ourselves to exercise any judgment, simply because we do not know or care enough about either plaintiff or defendant to be interested in the decision.

When then a man is told by those he looks up to as the ablest divines, that he ought not to exercise private judgment in religious matters, he will soon perceive, if he possess even a moderate share of intelligence, that this precept can be complied with only in one way; by *withdrawing his attention* as much as possible from the whole subject, except as far as regards outward forms and observances, and sedulously refraining from asking of himself the questions, what the Christian religion is, and what truth there is in it.

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\* On this point we have already treated in Caution No. II., pp. 19, 20.



And this state of mind is closely allied to, and immediately leads to, that which it has been our present object to guard against.

V. And this tendency in the Tractite teaching to make Christianity assume the form of a religion of mere outward rites and observances, discloses itself still more plainly, when we consider the stress which that party lay upon what they call “the apostolical succession” of the Christian ministry.

The “apostolical succession” of the Christian ministry has been, indeed, very properly insisted upon by many of our divines, who only meant thereby the existence of *such an order of men as Christian ministers* continuously from the times of the apostles. And the existence of an apostolical succession (in this sense) is perhaps as complete a moral certainty as any historical fact can be; because (independently of the various incidental notices by historians, of such a class of persons) it is plain that if, at the present day, or a century ago, or ten centuries ago, a number of men had appeared in the world, professing (as our clergy do now) to hold a recognised office in a Christian church, to which they had been regularly appointed as successors to others, whose predecessors, in like manner, had held the same, and so on, from the times of the apostles,—if such a pretence had been put forth by a set of men assuming an office which no one had ever heard of before,—it is plain that they would at once have been refuted and exposed. And as this will apply equally to each successive generation of Christian ministers, till we come up to the time when the institution was confessedly new,—that is, to the time when Christian ministers were appointed by the apostles, who professed themselves eye-witnesses of the resurrection,—we have, in the Christian ministry (as Leslie has remarked) a standing monument of the fact of that event’s having been proclaimed immediately after the time when it was said to have occurred. This therefore is fairly brought forward as an evidence of its truth.

But the “apostolical succession” which the Tractites insist upon—and with which they often artfully confound that just explained—is really a very different thing. What they require for the lawful administration of the sacraments is, that each priest should be ordained by some bishop, who was himself consecrated by some other bishop that derives his episcopal orders transmitted in unbroken succession by a line of bishops like himself, the first of whom was ordained by an apostle.

Now that there *were* always from the apostles’ times men acting in the capacity of Christian bishops in particular places—as Antioch, for example, or Rome—is a thing not very difficult of proof; because such matters are things of public notoriety, and naturally find a place in history: but that each one of these prelates, during



the eighteen centuries that have since elapsed, had been regularly baptized, and then ordained first deacon, then priest, and then bishop, it is by no means so easy to make out; since it is vain to look after records of such things in very ancient times; while yet any one flaw in the succession would (on the Tractite theory) be enough to break the whole chain.

There is not a minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up with any approach to certainty his own spiritual pedigree. The sacramental virtue (for such it is that is implied—whether the term be used or not—in the principle we have been speaking of) dependent on the imposition of hands, with a due observance of apostolical usages, by a bishop, himself duly consecrated, after having been in like manner baptized into the church, and ordained deacon, and priest,—this sacramental virtue, if a single link of the chain be faulty, must, on the above principles, be utterly nullified ever after, in respect of all the links that hang on that one. For if a bishop has not been duly consecrated, or had not been, previously, rightly ordained, his ordinations are null; and so are the ministrations of those ordained by him; and *their* ordination of others; (supposing any of the persons ordained by him to attain to the episcopal office;) and so on, without end. The poisonous taint of informality, if it once creep in undetected, will spread the infection of nullity to an indefinite and irremediable extent.

And who can undertake to pronounce that during that long period usually designated as the dark ages, no such taint ever was introduced? Irregularities could not have been wholly excluded without a perpetual miracle; and that no such miraculous interference existed, we have even historical proof. Amid the numerous corruptions of doctrine and of practice, and gross superstitions, that crept in, during those ages, we find recorded descriptions not only of the profound ignorance, and profligacy of life, of many of the clergy, but also of the grossest irregularities in respect of discipline and form. We read of bishops consecrated when mere children;—of men officiating who barely knew their letters;—of prelates expelled, and others put into their places, by violence;—of illiterate and profligate laymen, and habitual drunkards, admitted to holy orders; and, in short, of the prevalence of every kind of disorder, and reckless disregard of the decency which the apostle enjoins. It is inconceivable that any one even moderately acquainted with history, can feel a certainty, or any approach to certainty, that, amid all this confusion and corruption, every requisite form was, in every instance, strictly adhered to, by men, many of them openly profane and secular, and unrestrained by public opinion, through the gross ignorance of the population among which they lived; and that no one not duly consecrated or ordained was admitted to sacred offices.



Even in later and more civilized and enlightened times, the probability of an irregularity, though very greatly diminished, is yet diminished only, and not absolutely destroyed. Even in the memory of persons living, there existed a bishop concerning whom there was so much mystery and uncertainty prevailing as to when, where, and by whom, he had been ordained, that doubts existed in the mind of some persons, whether he had ever been ordained at all. We do not say that there was good ground for the suspicion:—but the existence, actual, or even possible, of such a suspicion,—the actual, or even conceivable concurrence of circumstances such as to manifest the *possibility* of such an irregularity—is sufficient with a view to the present argument.

Now, let any one proceed on the hypothesis that there are, suppose, a hundred links connecting any particular minister with the apostles; and let him even suppose that not above half of this number pass through such periods as admit of any possible irregularity; and then, placing at the lowest estimate the probability of defectiveness in respect of each of the remaining fifty, taken separately, let him consider what amount of probability will result from the *multiplying* of the whole together. The ultimate consequence must be, that any one who sincerely believes that his claim to the benefits of the gospel-covenant depends on his own minister's claim to the supposed sacramental virtue of true ordination, and this again, on perfect apostolical succession as above described, must be involved, in proportion as he reads and inquires, and reflects, and reasons on the subject, in the most distressing doubt and perplexity.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the advocates of this theory studiously disparage reasoning, deprecate all exercise of the mind in reflection, decry appeals to evidence, and lament that even the power of reading should be imparted to the people. It is not without cause that they dread and lament “an age of too much light,” and wish to involve religion in “a solemn and awful gloom.” It is not without cause that, having removed the Christian's confidence from a rock to base it on sand, they forbid all prying curiosity to examine their foundation.

And, if it be said that, notwithstanding all the risks which the apostolical succession must have run, in passing through so many generations, its purity was nevertheless maintained by a perpetual miracle, such a reply will not ultimately much mend the matter; since those who believe, and those who disbelieve that plea, will both eventually be apt to come to, practically, the same conclusion, that Christianity—if this be a true representation of it—is MAINLY A SYSTEM OF OUTWARD ORDINANCES; and that what some regard as its essentials, a Christian faith, and a Christian heart, are comparatively a small part of it.

On this we shall enlarge somewhat further in the next Caution.



## No. XVI.

WE adverted in the last Caution to the mistake of confounding together two, in reality quite different, things: the apostolical succession of a Christian ministry *generally*, and the apostolical descent in an unbroken line of this or that individual minister. But we must recall your attention to this point, because this important distinction is likely to escape the notice of those who are hasty and careless in reflection, and is skilfully kept out of sight by artful sophists.

The case, you will observe, stands thus. We are told that the divine grace of the Christian sacraments, and the efficacy of all a clergyman's ministrations, depend on his having been ordained by a bishop, who was himself ordained and consecrated by a person, who, in turn, derived his orders from one who had again derived his, through a vast number of intermediate links, from the apostles; and that if this unbroken chain be deceptive, (as it must be, if any one link of it be wanting,) all the supposed sacraments ministered, and all the acts of spiritual authority done by such a supposed minister, are null and void.

Now, when a man is taught this, he will naturally reflect that he cannot have any reasonable assurance of being even a baptized Christian, unless he can have *proof* that the ministers under whom he has been placed really do possess this apostolical succession. And, when he asks for such proofs, he is answered by being told that the "apostles ordained elders in every city;" and that there is every reason to believe (which is quite true) that these ordained others, and those again others, and so on down to the present day; and that there always have been Christian ministers in every church from the apostles' times, downward.

This would be very satisfactory *if* proof could be added that no instance of irregularity in this transmission of orders could ever have taken place in any individual instance; or, that the particular minister about whom he is anxiously inquiring, can fully establish, in his own case, an unbroken chain.

But, in default of such proof, our unhappy inquirer must be content with the assurance that it is *very probable* his own minister is a regular and real one; and that, therefore, those placed under his ministry are *most likely* members of the Church of Christ; and are *probably* partaking of real sacraments, and not invalid and empty appearances! But of all this they can have no reasonable *certainty*.

And yet nothing short of such certainty ever satisfies reasonable men, in any matter that they have really at heart. If, for exam-



ple, you were to go into a chemist's shop for some important medicine, on which might turn the life or death of some dear friend, you would not be satisfied at being told that the bottle he presented to you was one out of fifty, all of which perhaps,—or, at least, forty-eight or forty-nine of them,—contained the right medicine, though it certainly was possible the fiftieth might contain poison; but that he *hoped* you had got one of the right bottles.

Or, again, if you should claim a share in some property, alleging that the former owner of that property undoubtedly *had* several relatives, and that it was highly probable you were one of them, you well know that your claim would be laughed to scorn, unless you could bring proof of *your own* relationship.

In order, then, to allay the distressing and perplexing doubts which must be produced in every thoughtful mind by the doctrine we have been speaking of, the maintainers of it endeavour to escape the difficulty by boldly assuming that the apostolical succession, *at least in the church to which they themselves happen to belong*, has been, and will ever be, preserved, by a continual miracle, from being broken by any irregularity, even in half-barbarian ages and regions, full of ignorance and disorder of all kinds.

But as for *Christian doctrine and practice*, in these, it is notorious what gross and wide-spread corruptions have arisen in Christendom, beginning even in the very apostolic age. Against *these* corruptions, it is manifest, no such supernatural safeguard was provided. The “apostolical succession” of right faith and right conduct was *not* secured by any miraculous interference.

Our *own* orders, for example, are supposed to have been preserved pure in England through centuries, when gross superstition and immorality prevailed generally through the church in this country. And this supposition is not made, you will observe, on the ground that it can be shown to have been at all unlikely, in the natural course of things, that the chain of our succession should have been broken. Far otherwise. It is acknowledged that history reveals the fact that serious irregularities did often occur; since it tells us of the steps taken to remedy them; and it is conceded that, if we looked only to natural causes, similar irregularities may have occurred in cases where they were never detected, or where, if detected, it was too late, or too troublesome to correct them. But it is said that all such evils *must* have been guarded against, because, otherwise, the people would have been left without a priesthood, and consequently without the ordinary means of grace. Yet all the while, it is granted, that no miracle was wrought to secure to the people pure moral or doctrinal teaching. A miraculous interposition secured the integrity of what was external in religion, but no miraculous interposition was vouchsafed for the preservation of the rest.



And further, according to this supposition, the orders of a corrupt and corrupting clergy were, in those ages, preserved pure, by a special miracle, for the exclusive benefit of such of the people as would receive the erroneous teaching and submit to the exorbitant demands of that corrupt and corrupting priesthood.\* For if, in those ages, any number of the laity, however large, had perceived the falsity of the doctrines taught by the clergy, and the unlawfulness of complying with their injunctions, such a body of mere laymen would have been (upon the supposition of the Tractites) reduced to the alternative either of professing what they did not believe, and practising what they knew to be wrong, or of foregoing the ordinary means of grace—those sacraments which (we are told) can only be dispensed by a “regular” ministry—and putting themselves out of the pale of the visible church. And, accordingly, thorough-going Tractites do not only admit, but earnestly contend, that multitudes of those who in former times renounced the communion of the Church of Rome rather than join in its errors, and whole nations of foreign Protestants at the present day, who have, from like causes, lost the “apostolical succession,” did, by thus separating from a corrupt church and its priesthood, deprive themselves of the ordinary means of grace.

Indeed, it is manifest that, if a peculiar order of men, like the clergy, are, in this way, absolutely essential to the salvation of the people, and if that order has the exclusive right of perpetuating its own succession by admitting persons into its ranks, and deciding upon its own privileges, such an order has practically the power, if the members of it only hold together, of ruling absolutely all who recognise its authority. And if Christ has made a clergy so constituted thus essential to his church, while at the same time he has not guaranteed that this clergy shall never teach men gross errors and promulgate most unrighteous laws, then, plainly, he has made *external* rites, and the outward frame of the church, the *essentials* of his religion, and purity of faith and morals only accidental to it.

It is plain, indeed, that, upon the Tractite principle, no provision at all is made for the preservation of *truth* among the laity, when once the clergy have gone wrong. As for endeavouring to guard themselves against errors and corruptions by a devout and diligent study of Scripture, and careful exercise of their own reason thereon, this (we have seen) is prohibited. Men are not (according to that system) to exercise any private judgment upon the subject, but are bound to acquiesce in whatever their legitimate pastors may tell them.

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\* And this difficulty presses not those only who acknowledge that Romanist teaching is corrupt, but those also who would hold it to be correct; as will appear manifest from considering the case of the laity in the Greek Church, and under the prevalence of Arianism in Spain.



Now, if the legitimate pastors always taught men correctly, then, a standing miracle to maintain a line of legitimate pastors always in the church, would really be a provision for the maintenance of truth; but, if the pastors were for centuries together teaching gross error, then, a miraculous provision for maintaining such a body of men as the *legitimate* teachers, looks dangerously like a provision for the inculcation and establishment of error.

The conclusion, therefore, (as we remarked in the last Caution,) cannot but force itself on every intelligent mind, that Christianity—if this be a true representation of it—is mainly *a system of outward ordinances*; and that what some regard as its essentials, a Christian faith and a Christian heart, are comparatively a small part of it. Those who, in consequence, reject the religion, as on a level with the Brahminical superstitions, and those who receive it as thus represented, will alike have been alienated from true Christianity.

Nor will a man, even thus, escape from endless perplexities about the validity of those very sacraments in which he supposes the only essential part of the Christian religion to consist. For the Tractites themselves will not say that the true apostolical succession has been miraculously kept pure and entire in *every* particular church which *pretends* to possess it. On the contrary, some of them profess grave doubts of the validity of the Swedish and (still more) of the Moravian orders; though both the Swedish and Moravian churches *claim* an apostolical succession. Notwithstanding, then, a miraculous interference to maintain the succession *somewhere* in the church, it may be (in their view) a very nice and difficult matter to determine whether the line has been kept unbroken in *any given* church. The supposed miraculous interference, therefore, does not, after all, exclude the possibility of grounds for distressing anxiety on the part of particular individuals lest *they* should be excluded from the ordinary means of grace, and lest the sacraments, from which they look for salvation, should be absolutely null and void.

And when men's anxiety has once been aroused upon such a question, it is plain that they will have to determine it after all by their private judgment. Their clergy manifestly cannot determine *this* question for them, since it is one upon the decision of which depends their own claim to be considered as clergy at all. Nor again, until this question is determined, can the people reasonably repose an absolute faith in the teaching of the men who claim to be their pastors, with respect to any part of Christianity whatsoever.

Here then, you see, that while the Tractites are ever deprecating all inquiries into the evidences of Christianity, and all exercise of private judgment upon matters of doctrine, as leading to skepti-



cism and irreligion, they do in reality (by their principle of the necessity of an "apostolical succession") force men into far more difficult inquiries, and engage private judgment upon a subject which is (in their view) of much greater practical importance, and certainly much greater perplexity, than any point of doctrine.

Some, however, escape these doubts and perplexities by not *reflecting* on the degree of uncertainty which must (on such a theory of apostolical succession) attach to the orders of every clergyman in Christendom, and consequently to the validity of the sacraments administered by him. But though ignorance and inattention may bring temporary peace, it cannot bring safety; and, therefore, it is right that such persons should be made to see the insecurity of their position upon their own theory.

Let a man then consider his own case. The question is—Am I a member of the visible church, and in the enjoyment of the ordinary means of grace? Now this, upon the Tractite view, involves these two questions—Was the person by whom I was baptized a regular minister? and is the person from whom I receive the holy communion, &c. a regular minister?

Suppose that I am settled under a different pastor from him who baptized me—here is my salvation made to depend upon the validity of the orders of two other persons, into whose history it may be very difficult for me to inquire.

But this, at least, I know; that the validity of the orders of each of these depends, in its turn, upon the validity of the orders of those by whom they were baptized and ordained; and that consequently my security of having the means of salvation depends upon the validity of the orders of six or *seven* more persons, at almost the first step.

Advance a step further, and take the three bishops by whom the ministers on whom I depend were ordained: for three there probably were; since the person who baptized me was at least *once* ordained; and the person from whom I receive the communion, absolution, &c. must have been *twice* ordained. Take, then, these three bishops, and you will perceive that, at the very next remove, there are twelve new links required in the chain. For each of these bishops should have been (1) baptized, made (2) a deacon, (3) a priest, and (4) a bishop, regularly, to enable him to confer valid orders upon the persons from whom I derive my title to salvation. We have here, then, nineteen links, a failure in any one of which will put me out of the pale of the visible church, and deprive me of the ordinary means of grace.

Carry back the same inquiry a few steps further, and you will find the links multiplying upon you so fast, that it will be troublesome to count them; and then consider what a vast number of such links will be required to complete the chain *through eighteen cen-*



*turies* from the time of the apostles, and what will be the result of multiplying together the probabilities of each step.

Suppose, for example, that it is four chances in five that B is the rightful successor of A, we express this by saying that the probability is four-fifths. Now, suppose again the probability that C is successor of B to be likewise four-fifths, and so likewise that D is successor of C, and again E of D. Then the probability that E is successor of A will be four-fifths of four-fifths of four-fifths of four-fifths—that is something less than *one-third*.

Now the chance of your possessing the means of salvation is (upon the Tractite theory) just the chance of there having been no failure of any single link in this enormous chain from the apostles' times to ours. The chance against your possessing the means of salvation is the chance of such a failure having *once* occurred.

And is it thus that the Christian is to "give diligence" to make his calling and election *sure*? Is it thus that he is to "run not as *uncertainly*," and to draw near to God in *full assurance* of faith? And did the Redeemer come upon earth, and die on the cross, and rise again, to obtain for his followers this doubtful hope of salvation?—doubtful, not through any uncertainty as to *their* faithfulness, but from causes over which they have no control?

When men have been startled by such considerations as these, they are willing to calm their minds again by the reflection that, though we are bound to regard as wholly void and worthless the ministrations of any one who is not (in their sense) a rightful successor of the apostles, and though it is impossible in the case of *each individual* minister to ascertain this with perfect certainty, still, any one who receives the rites of the church at the hands of those whom he *believes*, according to the *very best judgment* and most *perfect knowledge within his reach*, to possess the requisite qualifications, will have *done his best*; and may, on that ground, hope for acceptance before his divine Judge; trusting that he shall suffer no loss through any mistake that was wholly unavoidable.

And certainly, if any one should, after having used all possible care and precaution, administer to a sick man a poisonous dose, he would—although the patient would die, not the less—be acquitted of all moral blame. And so also, if he were transmitting to some distant country a cargo of Bibles, which were changed, through the fraud or negligence of an agent, for a parcel of worthless or noxious books, though the people receiving them would lose the edification designed, one may hope that the divine goodness would accept, in respect of the sender, the will for the deed.

But then, it should be remembered that if no *more* is required of a man than to do his utmost, he is also required to do no *less*. One who should administer a medicine *without* due care, even though it should chance to be the right one, would be no less mo-



rally responsible than if the same want of care had happened to produce a fatal result.

Whoever therefore puts in the plea of having *done his best* to secure the ministrations of one possessing the above qualification, ought, consistently with his own principle, to be (conditionally) *re-baptized, reordained, reconsecrated, &c.* again and again, as often as he has access to any fresh ministers: just as any one, who is earnestly bent on conveying some most important intelligence to a friend in a remote part of the world, will write by *every* ship likely to touch there, in order to make sure of leaving nothing undone toward effecting his object.

We have here therefore a ready *test*, for judging whether a person who professes the above principle, and puts in the above plea, is really sincere, and heartily and practically in earnest, in his profession.

It has been alleged, for instance, that the chances of any interruption of apostolical succession are greatly diminished by the presence of *three* bishops, instead of only one, at the consecration of a new one. And this is admitted; but then it must also be admitted that the risk, how much soever *lessened*, is not, nor ever can be, *annihilated*; and moreover that it would be still *further* and further diminished by the presence of *four*, or five, and of any greater number, to an unlimited extent. And it is also evident that however minute the chance may ultimately be of any *actual* mistake, still this makes no difference as to the responsibility of those who put in the plea, not of actual avoidance of mistake, but of having done *their very utmost* to guard against it.

As for those who hold that the presence of three or more bishops is an appointment merely for the sake of decent and solemn publicity, *they* indeed need suffer no anxious doubts as to the validity of any public act, performed according to the rules laid down in the church. But one who regards the presence of the three bishops as constituting some degree of *safeguard* against the *danger of nullity* that might result from some by-gone informality, must admit the *existence* of such danger; and also, that it would be still further diminished (though never completely done away) by resorting to the ministration of fresh and fresh bishops without limit. And this he clearly *is* bound to resort to, if he sincerely rests his justification, not on the extreme smallness and insignificance of the risk, but on his having *left nothing undone* to provide against it.

Such precautions as these we really do take in matters of this world, where we feel that any deep interest is at stake. If you doubt whether your child has taken the cow-pock, you have him vaccinated again and again. If a friend is missing, you send out as many messengers as you can, in *every* direction in which it is possible that he may have strayed.

Now, if those who urge the above plea do not act thus also in



the case of the sacraments, must it not be either because they do not really value the grace which they suppose the sacraments to convey, or because they only half believe their own theory of apostolical succession—or finally, make this insincere plea merely as an excuse for neglecting to do what is distasteful to them?

“Well, but,” it is said, “putting such cases as this of continued rebaptizations, and reordinations, &c., and then illustrating their necessity by talking about ship-letters and vaccination, is turning a grave subject into a jest. It is appealing to ridicule; and we confess that we cannot *refute* ridicule. We can only *despise* it.”

But if the consequences which do justly follow from these men's principles be really *ridiculous*, is that *our* fault? Are we to avoid drawing them, because that may raise a laugh at their expense? If so, the more directly absurd any thing is, the more secure is it from refutation; since it is impossible to refute such things without placing them in a ludicrous point of view. And, indeed, the more gravely you handle them, the more ludicrous they are apt to appear; only, if you are too grave upon such occasions, people will be apt to laugh both at you and your subject.

If it be ridiculous to suppose that it is a man's duty to spend his whole life in anxious and minute care about the external rites of religion, that is really saying that the Tractite theory, of which such anxiety would be the legitimate consequence, is, itself, ridiculous—not, observe, that it *may be* so stated as to appear ridiculous, but that it *cannot* be fairly stated *without* being seen to be ridiculous. And, if so, are not those who would seek to shelter it from exposure, by stifling the true statement of it, much more to blame than those who describe it as it really is, although at the risk of making men smile at its absurdity?

In any thing that we have said in this, or in the last Caution, upon the present subject, we have not (you will perceive) been denying the necessity of a regular ministry in general, or depreciating such an episcopal ministry as we happily enjoy in particular. We have only been contending against such blind attempts to raise their importance in the eyes of the ignorant, as must in the end (if received as the only possible account of their value) make them appear utterly contemptible in the eyes of all reflecting persons.

We are not denying that the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, were instituted by the apostles in the original platform of the church; nor yet do we dispute the propriety of adhering to the original platform of the church, so far as it can be certainly discovered, and so far as it is *not manifestly unsuited to the altered circumstances of modern times*.

What we contend against is, an attempt to make adherence to certain strict rules of ecclesiastical government an essential condi-



tion of salvation, without any express declaration on the part of Christ or his apostles imposing such a condition. We take, in short, precisely the position of the great Reformers of our church.

They, in the Preface to the Ordination Services, profess a high respect for the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, and a strong sense of the propriety of retaining them. But upon what do they ground that judgment? Is it upon the *necessity* of those orders to men's salvation? Manifestly not; for if that had been their meaning, they would, no doubt, have, in such a case, appealed to Scripture alone as their warrant; since it is from *Scripture alone*,—as they teach us in Article VI.—that all things necessary to salvation are to be proved. But in this case they do *not* appeal to Scripture alone. “It is evident,” they say, “unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures, *and ancient authors*, that from the apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's church—bishops, priests, and deacons.” It is of the *expediency* of maintaining unbroken an ancient and general usage they were speaking; not of the necessity of complying with a divine command.

Some, indeed, there are, who profess themselves loyal children of our church, and yet, while they acknowledge that the “apostolical succession” cannot be proved from Scripture alone, yet think themselves justified in maintaining that it is necessary to salvation. “All *doctrines*, indeed,” they say, “must be traced to Scripture, before they can be looked on as divinely revealed; but necessary *rites and outward visible institutions* might be safely intrusted to tradition; and, therefore, in the case of these, we may reasonably take tradition as our guide.

But the Article, as you see, makes no such distinction. “Holy Scripture,” it says, “containeth *all things* necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, *or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation*.”

Nor, indeed, is the distinction, however just, available in the present case. Since the question now is, not whether tradition may not prove *the fact* of the apostolic origin of certain outward institutions as we now have them, but whether it can prove the *doctrine* of their necessity to salvation. And these are two widely different things. Grant it to be highly improbable that men should ever have been persuaded that a rite or institution which notoriously began in their own times had been in existence among them and their ancestors from time immemorial, and that this is a reason for believing that outward institutions generally reputed apostolic, really are so,—grant all this, if you please, for the present; yet will it not remain quite possible that outward institutions, which were not originally thought necessary, may, after a while, come to



have an excessive sanctity and importance attributed to them, and thus quite alter their character in men's minds, while their form in men's eyes remain the same?

But, indeed, the security of tradition as a means of purely conveying apostolic rites and institutions is grossly exaggerated by these persons.

It is true that the particular generation of men among whom a new rite or institution is introduced, cannot be brought, against the evidence of their senses, to believe that it is an old one always practised and known by themselves and their forefathers. But it may be introduced among *them* as a *new* thing; and then, after some succeeding generations have passed away, and when the records of its introduction have been lost or forgotten, it may come to be regarded as a primitive rite or institution. Thus, the peasantry are often found to ascribe, in local tradition, a far higher antiquity to old ruins and monuments than really belongs to them; not because, when those buildings were first erected, the neighbours were persuaded that they had always stood there, but because the true date of their erection was afterward forgotten, and a false one substituted for it by vague guesses and conjecture.

And further, not only may totally new institutions be in this way introduced, but the old institutions run continual risks of being so gradually *altered*, from time to time, as to become, in the end, very different from what they were at first, though still retaining the old names. Yet as long as the names are kept the same, men are apt to fancy that the things remain unaltered. But a little reflection will put you on your guard against so weak a prejudice. We have, indeed, in one sense, always had aldermen in England, since the old Saxon time. But you need not be told that an alderman of the nineteenth century is a very different officer from an alderman in King Alfred's days.

So, a bishop, in the primitive ages, was the chief minister of a particular church, and had no ecclesiastical superior on earth; and it was even held then as an undisputed maxim that there could not be in any one church more than one bishop. And a bishop in these times was not the sole spiritual governor of the diocese over which he was placed; but he presided over a council of elders, who, in concert with him, managed the affairs of the diocese.

But with us, you know, a church is composed of many bishoprics; and over bishops are set archbishops; and over them again, in some countries, patriarchs. And within a particular diocese, the bishop is the sole governor; nor need he consult the presbyters in the management of church affairs unless he choose.

A deacon, again, in early times, was an officer who had charge of the church-money, and who was intrusted with the task of dis-



pensing it to the poor. But with us, you know, those parts of what was the deacon's office are generally devolved upon others.

Though the old names, therefore, are still retained, yet our bishops and deacons differ in many respects from the bishops and deacons of the primitive ages.

Now we are not saying that such changes as these may not have been advisable, or unavoidable, under the altered circumstances of the church. We are only saying that such changes have undeniably taken place. And, therefore, when men come to see that the very persons who contend that the primitive institutions were unalterably bound upon the church as necessary to salvation, do themselves maintain institutions very different, and very different by their own confession from the primitive, it is to be apprehended that they will soon begin to doubt entirely the trustworthiness of such teachers. And when men have been taught that institutions necessary to salvation were left to be handed down by tradition, because these might be safely preserved in their integrity by such a conveyance, and afterward come to learn that those institutions were in fact greatly altered from their original form, they will begin to suspect that the whole doctrine of supernatural grace is nothing better than a "cunningly devised fable."

For our part, we are convinced that the whole foundation of this system is unstable, and that God has not thus made his church dependent for salvation upon such an insecure guarantee. We can find no unalterable model of government drawn for the Christian Church in Scripture, as there was for the Jewish. And it appears to us that, from the analogy of the Jewish Church, a strong presumption may be drawn against supposing that a minute ritual and unalterable frame of government *was* intended to be imposed upon us, and yet left to be handed down by tradition. In the case of the Jews, the *experiment* (so to speak) was tried, of a fixed and minute model unalterably bound upon the people; and *there*, anxious precaution for preserving that model from being defaced, was taken by an exact delineation of it in the written law. Yet, after all, we find that it was overlaid by a mass of human traditions, encroaching upon the remains of liberty which God had left his church, disfiguring his plainest institutions, and yet claiming an origin equally divine with that written word of God which they impiously "made of none effect." In the written word of the New Testament, on the contrary, a different course was taken. *There* no rules are given, except the general ones which direct that "all shall be done decently and in order;" a method which, while it gives the constitutions of the church all the lawful force they really need, as acts of legitimate authority, having the peace and order of the society for their object, seems intended to shut out all attempts at investing them with a higher character, as unalterable divine institutions. In



ritual, as well as in moral matters, the design of the gospel seems not so much to give the church minute *external* directions, as to infuse a spirit and form a character which shall enable men to govern themselves.

But these considerations have led us too far from our immediate subject. We hope soon to resume it in the next "Caution."

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## No. XVII.

WE have occupied you long with an endeavour to point out the way in which the Tract movement is likely to lead men into infidelity. But if you duly estimate the importance of the subject, you will not think that too much time has been spent upon it. That infidelity is daily spreading is a complaint one hears on all sides; it behoves every good Christian to look narrowly for the spring of that bitter stream which is welling fast, though often silently, all around us. Now let any one but pass in review before his mind the several points which have been dwelt upon in the last five Cautions, and consider in how many ways the teaching and practice of the Tract party, as there described, tend to create and to foster irreligion; and he will see, we think, no reason to wonder at the amount of it that now exists. He will rather conclude that it might have been anticipated from a knowledge of human nature; and that there is ground for alarming apprehensions of its increase.

For let a man but be once convinced, (1,) That Christianity cannot *stand the test of inquiry*,—2dly, That he has no ground for certainty as to the *real belief* of those who teach it,—3dly, That *Scripture need not be studied*,—4thly, That he had better *withdraw his thoughts*, as much as possible, from the subject of religious truth, since otherwise he could not but exercise that private judgment which is forbidden,—and, 5thly, that Christianity is mainly a system of *outward ordinances*:—let him but adopt all these notions, and what is there to stand between him and infidelity or indiffer-entism?

There are many other points, indeed, besides the five that we have just enumerated, in which Tractism tends to infidelity: but to go through them *all* would be a long and a superfluous labour. For, if we have proved our case as to these five, which are points wherein the party generally agrees, the tendency of the system will have been sufficiently exposed already; and if any one who has read and considered what we have said upon those points in the former Cau-



tions, is still unsatisfied with our arguments, we have but slender hopes of convincing him by any thing that might be added upon other similar topics. There is, however, one other of such topics which it may be profitable to notice briefly here; because the point it relates to is one of the very first elements of Tractism, and one which is received by a great many who would at present disown several of those other Tractite tenets, the infidel tendency of which we have been exposing.

The point to which we are now referring is the notion (very widely prevalent) of a Universal Church, forming, necessarily and by divine institution, one *visible society upon earth*, to which all Christians owe obedience. This error has—we may remark in passing—been greatly fostered (if not occasioned) by the ambiguity of words.

*The church* (meaning thereby the congregation or assembly of all Christ's subjects) is spoken of in Scripture as *one* body, with one head, and under one common authority. But the church, in this sense of the word, manifestly is not, and indeed cannot be in the present state of things, one visible society upon earth; because its *Head* is invisible, and in heaven; and because it is impossible that any society should subsist where its Head is absent, and there is no governor appointed by him to exercise supreme rule in his place over the whole society.

Again, it is plain from Scripture that our Lord's will is that men upon earth who recognise him as their Master, by openly professing faith in him, and submitting to baptism into his name, should form themselves into communities—also called *churches*—for the purpose of mutual edification, and the support and farther extension of his religion in the world; which communities, like all other societies, require of course some kind of government and external organization.

And, when we have to speak of what concerns all such societies in common, we naturally speak of them as “the church;” just as when we have to speak of what is common to all *states*, or *magistrates*, or *farmers*, or *physicians*, we talk of “the state,” “the magistrate,” “the farmer,” “the physician,” or “the faculty,”—that is, the faculty of medicine.

We say, for example, “The cure of souls belongs to *the church*; but arrangements for man's temporal well-being are the proper business of *the state*.” Or again: “The magistrate may enforce his laws by civil penalties; but *the church* has no right to inflict such punishments.” When the Apostle Peter bids us “submit to *the king* as supreme,” he certainly was not thinking of one universal monarch, but of every particular king, each in his own realm.

Now, when we speak thus of “the state,” “the magistrate,” and “the farmer,” &c., every one understands that what we mean to



speak of is, each and every state, magistrate, or farmer, &c.; and, therefore, there would have been, one might have thought, no difficulty in understanding that, when “the church” is spoken of in the same manner, it is each and every particular church, or society of Christians, that is meant. But men first confounded together the two meanings of the word *church* pointed out above; and then, when they heard “the church” spoken of as something visible upon earth, with earthly governors and an outward organization, imagined that some one grand society was meant, instead of all the particular societies that can truly be described as *churches*.

Now, if our Master’s design had really been to make us subjects of one grand visible society upon earth, which should be divinely commissioned to make laws for all Christians, he would not have left us—if he were indeed from heaven and not of men—in any reasonable doubt as to *who* and *where* are the *governors* of that society, and *what* its decisions. For an outward visible society, of which the very chief governors and laws are matter of dispute among its subjects, can be no better than a rope of sand; and the very purpose of instituting such a body would be defeated by leaving such points as these in uncertainty.

Now experience shows that, the more any one inquires, the more difficult it is to find all this: and hence it will, in the end, be inferred by many, that, as it is not easy—nor indeed possible—to find that Supreme Ruler who speaks the will of the universal church, Christianity is a fable; for a fable it surely is, if it teach that obedience to the universal church is necessary, and yet leaves us destitute of all means of discovering how and to whom that obedience is to be rendered.

Some, indeed, who are more easily satisfied, will accede at once to the claims of Rome; because she claims what they think must exist *somewhere*, and what evidently does not exist anywhere else—a present living authority (in the person of the Pope, the pretended successor of the Apostle Peter) for the final decision of all controversies, and making laws for the government of all Christians throughout the world. But the supremacy of Peter even in his own lifetime, and again his transmission of that supremacy to the popes, cannot be proved from Scripture, nor indeed from any historical record whatever—unless you first submit to take the word of the very claimant of infallible interpretation in proof that his interpretation is infallible.

Others again will for a while find shelter in a professed submission to what they call General Councils, and which they allege to be entitled to unqualified obedience, as the representatives of the whole body of the church. But the more quick-sighted will soon perceive (1) that there is no evidence whatever of the divine institution of any such assemblies—no conveyance from Christ of any



supreme authority to them, nor promise of infallible guidance to even a really general council: (2) that, in point of fact, no council that was ever held can be proved to have been a fair representation of *all* Christians: (3) that there is no proof that a bare *majority* in a council has any right, except by an original unanimous agreement to that effect, to set aside the minority, and to call its decisions the decisions of the council; and, (4,) even waiving every other question, that there is *now* no general council sitting; no power able or willing to convoke one, and no likelihood, nay no possibility, of bringing together such an assembly. Where then—it will be asked—is the seat of government *now*? Is it that there was *once* such a universal church as we are told of, but that there is no longer any?

Thus, when men have been persuaded that Christ *intended* to make all Christians form one visible organized society upon earth, and yet left them destitute of the means requisite for carrying such a design into effect, they will be tempted to say, “This man began to build and was not able to finish,” and consequently to regard Christianity itself as a failure, and its founder as a fanatic or an impostor.

What sacrifices have these men made to attain that unity and concord on which their hearts were fixed, and how vain have all their sacrifices and labours proved! They thought this object not too dearly purchased by giving up private judgment, and agreeing to abide by the decisions of the Church-universal, “the authorized guide.” But, after bidding farewell to reason and to truth, they have found themselves still unable to attain this unity, or even to agree about the very foundation upon which it was to be built,—the exact powers, and the residence, of the authorized guide whom they proposed to follow. They set about building a Tower of Babel, and fell into confusion. Some went to Rome: others to the Via Media; and both are “scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

Now, it is not strange if those who have been taught to regard such abortive attempts as results of an application of the genuine principles of Christianity, should come to look with suspicion, or something worse, upon the principles which have led to such an issue.

Let us add one more instance in the case of confession:—

“We believe,” says an able writer, “that even in the hands of an honest and enlightened confessor, compulsory confession,—that is to say a confession in which the penitent is not allowed to select the matters on which he wishes for advice, but is bound, under the threat of incurring mortal sin, to tell every action, every wish, and every thought—with all its advantages, which are very great—is, on the whole, productive of a largely preponderating amount of



evil. The great objection to it is, that it creates a new sin—a sin of which a Protestant cannot be guilty, and a sin to which those whose consciences it will affect most mischievously, are peculiarly exposed.

“We can suppose a person so insensible as to be able, without deep humiliation, to stand in mental nakedness before his priest. But a man with such coarse feelings is not likely to have a sensitive conscience. Gross, palpable sins are all that his memory is likely to accuse himself of. He confesses them, performs his penance, and obtains absolution; and the only evil is, the fear that the sin which has been so easily wiped out may be repeated;—an evil which a resolute and sagacious confessor may generally prevent by aggravating the severity of the penance. But persons, especially females, of shrinking delicacy of thought and feeling, are likely to be both curious in detecting their own mental improprieties, and averse to exposing them. Every attendance at the confessional must be a struggle between shame and duty. If duty prevail, we cannot but suspect that it must be at the expense of brushing off the bloom of the mind. We cannot think that every secret thought can be revealed without familiarizing the revealer with ideas which might have passed through the brain without a trace, if attention had not been called to them. If shame prevail, a mortal sin is committed under circumstances peculiarly formidable. It is committed deliberately, before the shrine, while the idea of God is present to the sinner’s mind; and it is unabsolved. The feeling of such a sin is likely to drive the timid into religious madness, and to induce the bold to take refuge in infidelity. We know that, in Roman Catholic countries, the necessity of confession is one of the obstacles to a religious life. ‘I do not go to church,’ we have been told, ‘because I do not communicate; and I cannot communicate, because I cannot bear to confess.’ According to the Roman Catholic creed, such a state of life is one of mortal sin. Those who indulge in it, therefore, must *hope* that that creed is false, at least in this respect. It is seldom, however, that a person, bred a Roman Catholic, believes his creed to be only *partially* erroneous. The church loses her infallible authority. With that authority fall numerous articles, both of faith and practice, which have no other support. A man with a strong predisposition to religious emotions, (in the language of phrenologists, with a powerful organ of veneration,) may stop himself on this inclined plane, catch hold of Scripture, and, like our ancestors, adopt Protestant opinions. But such instances are rare in this skeptical century. In the present state of public feeling, few that abandon Roman Catholicism rest short of deism.”\*

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\* *Edinburgh Review*, No. 184, pp. 528, 529.



There are not a few, however, upon whom these, or indeed any arguments, have but little effect, because they will not trust themselves to examine the arguments alleged, or make up their minds upon the subject. "To be sure"—such persons will be apt to say—"there does *seem* to be something very wrong in the Tract system; and the arguments against it have *never been answered*; but it is upheld by some very eminent, and learned, and apparently pious men; and are plain unlearned Christians competent to decide a question, on which there are differences among those who are far their superiors? It is best for us to avoid all controversy, and go on 'doing our duty in that state of life to which we are called.'"

Now what we would wish to press upon such persons is this—that this objection (if it were allowed) would make quite empty our Lord's warning to "beware of false prophets;" for it must be supposed that these "false apostles—deceitful workers, transforming themselves as the apostles of Christ," are likely to be—many of them—men of superior ability to those they seek to delude. Our Lord could not but have known this; and yet he expected (and therefore, of course, thought it possible) that ordinary men, in point of learning and intelligence, should be able to detect these "wolves in sheep's clothing." Nor is the task so hopeless as some are tempted by their own indolence to imagine, if we only bring to the work those requisites which are within the reach of ordinary men, as well as of the learned and able divine.

These requisites are—(1.) Attentive study and calm inquiry and reflection. Do not be in a hurry to form an opinion, but do not unnecessarily put it off. Do not decide without inquiry, but do not, in order to avoid deciding, omit inquiry. (2.) A sincere desire to attain *truth*, in order that you may regulate your opinions and conduct by it alone; and (3.) Pure *moral* principle. For a man of plain common sense, without any eminent learning or ability, will easily understand, if he be but thoroughly honest, what ought to be thought of men who habitually and openly act against their own professed principles. He will abhor and reject all such *inconsistency*.

It is true, indeed, that no man who is not *perfect* can be *altogether* consistent; since every fault he commits must be a departure from some better principle within him. But by inconsistency we mean a *deliberate* and *systematic course* of action quite at variance with one's real or professed principles.

A man, for example, who is overcome by some provocation, so as to use some rough language, or do some act of violence, is, in a certain degree, inconsistent, supposing him to hold that meekness and forgiveness are Christian virtues which he ought to practise. But to give way on some trying occasion to an infirmity of temper, is quite a different kind of inconsistency from that of the man who



should practise and advocate a system of bitter persecution, while professing the utmost detestation of all persecution. And so in other cases.

It may be said to be inconsistent with good husbandry to allow *any* weeds to grow up with the corn; and yet it would be hard to find a corn-field that had not a single weed in it. But if you should meet with a farmer professing to be anxious for good crops of corn, who should suffer his fields to be quite overrun with weeds, or who should sow half his land with wheat and half with the seeds of nettles and thistles, you would reckon him utterly inconsistent, if not downright mad.

Now try the Tractites by this text.

(1.) Observe in the first place their professed reverence for Episcopal authority, as compared with their insolent defiance of it in practice. In the earlier Tracts especially, nothing could surpass the tone of profound submission to Episcopal authority in which the writers spoke. Language seemed to sink beneath them in magnifying the office of a bishop. The maxim of Ignatius, "Do nothing without the bishop," was continually on their lips. And so, for a long time, they proceeded on their work, under cover of a cloud of splendid compliments to those ecclesiastical superiors whom they were even then, in fact, setting aside, and whom they were soon to treat with bitter reviling and scornful contempt. Bishops were then "the centres of the church's unity"—they were "on a level with the apostles in religious authority;"—their "jurisdiction was to be obeyed and never questioned;"—and men were taught to be as sure that "the bishop is Christ's appointed representative as if they actually saw upon his head a cloven tongue, like as of fire." In the meanwhile, what was the work in which these dutiful and submissive men were engaged? They, a handful of presbyters and deacons—without the express sanction, without the cognizance of any one bishop—of any one regular ecclesiastical authority whatever in England—were concerting plans for bringing the whole body under their own influence and control, for effecting what they owned themselves to be no less than an ecclesiastical revolution, and effectually "unprotestantizing" the Protestant Church of these realms. And, in the prosecution of this work, no pains were spared to make their proceedings seem to be the acts of the church; so that, when they had, for example, procured a censure of Dr. Hampden by the Convocation at Oxford;—though that censure was passed in such haste, and under such unfortunate circumstances, that some of the leading movers in it acknowledged that they had not, at the time, read the book they were censuring, but only garbled extracts from it, and afterward, when they had read it, pronounced it to be quite free from blame;—yet such a censure, so passed by the Convocation of a university,



was set down by Mr. Palmer, in a printed book, among the *church's* condemnations of heresy.

Such were their professions, and such their proceedings, while left to carry out their work without hinderance. But as soon as the tide began to turn against them, they showed their real contempt of authority in the most audacious manner.

For instance, when the Vice-chancellor of Oxford, and a committee of six doctors of divinity, passed a solemn censure upon one of Dr. Pusey's sermons, that regular tribunal of the university was denounced by one of the organs of the Tract party as a monstrous creature, "lengthy, *dragly*, crawling, insinuating, elusive, broken into joints, slimy, and venomous:"\* and by another, in equally good taste, as "six *penny whistles*, selected and tuned by one *Maitre-de-Ballet*."†

Again, when some of the bishops found it necessary to express their dissatisfaction with the Tract writers in published charges, the "ENGLISH CHURCHMAN" deemed it proper and decent to declare that "the time seems to have come for complaining of this mode of *harassing the church* by publishing these little *addresses*."‡ The Bishop of Chester was then openly declared to have "tampered with the received doctrines of the church:"§ the Bishop of Worcester was contemptuously set aside as having "small Latin, and less Greek, and very doubtful English:" the Archbishop of Dublin was pronounced a disseminator not of one only, but of several heresies:|| the Bishop of Gloucester was said by Dr. Pusey to have failed of perceiving the real meaning of what he censured; and this failure was charitably ascribed to "an affliction in which all must sympathize"—that is, in plain words, to a sickness under which his lordship had been labouring: and so of almost the whole bench. But it is unnecessary to multiply evidence upon this point, since hardly a day now passes in which some proof is not afforded of these men's resolute contempt of all Episcopal authority when used even in the slightest and most trivial matter against themselves. The operations of the party were, in this respect, at first disguised, but are now almost undisguised, *Presbyterianism*. Now, surely any honest man, whether Presbyterian or Episcopalian, must condemn the conduct of those who set up an usurping and self-appointed presbytery, to dictate to and oppose and insult the government of the church they choose to belong to; and this, while, all the time, they are professing, not only to be devoted members of an Episcopal Church, but also to condemn and utterly disallow all forms of church government but the Episcopal. For supposing a

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\* July, 1843, *British Critic*, p. 256.

† *English Churchman*, No. 29, p. 456.

‡ No. 55, p. 43.

§ No. 56.

|| *British Critic*, April, 1842, p. 302.



set of men who called themselves loyal subjects of a regal government, should form themselves into a democratic assembly, to hurl defiance at the sovereign and all the rulers and institutions of their country, would not every honest man, whether of royalist or republican principles, regard them as self-condemned?

II. Again, compare their professed reverence for the church, with those censures of the Liturgy, non-natural interpretations of the Articles, and introduction of unheard-of innovations which we laid before you in Caution XIII. In 1838, the *British Critic* solemnly protested, in the name of the party, that they desired no changes in the Prayer-Book, and that what had satisfied Andrews and Laud would for ever satisfy them: yet, two years after, the same journal announced with exultation that the *Liturgies of Rome and Paris* were being largely imported into England for the purposes of *dévotion*; and now the desire of "reappropriating" whatever was deliberately expunged from our Liturgy at the Reformation is hardly dissembled; and if men are taught to submit to the present Prayer-Book, it is to submit in the same spirit as they would to a famine, or a pestilence, or a bill of pains and penalties, or any other inevitable affliction.

III. Compare, lastly, the evidence we have adduced of their professed hostility to Romanism with their avowals of their own insincerity in the censures which they pronounced, and with their extravagant laudations of the very same church. Of that church, Mr. Newman, while he was professedly a Protestant, was suffered by his party, with hardly a murmur on their part, to declare, that "She alone, amid all the errors and evils of her practical system, has given free scope to the feelings of awe, mystery, tenderness, reverence, devotedness, and other feelings which may be especially called Catholic."\*

Lay together, we say, all these glaring inconsistencies, of which any man of common sense is a competent judge, and say whether they are not at least sufficient to take off all the weight to be ascribed to these men's supposed piety, and to their learning and abilities.

But why, it will be asked perhaps, cite as evidence against the Tract party at the present day, the words and acts of that party some years ago, when led by men who have now abandoned it, and gone over to Rome? The reason is plain. It is because the very same persons who adhered to and supported those men up to the moment when they actually quitted our ranks for those of the enemy, are still the leaders of that party; and with such evidence of the tendency of their principles before their eyes, daily multi-

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\* *Letter to Jelf*, pp. 25, 26.



plied by fresh and fresh secessions to Romanism, are still labouring on in the same work, and with the same inevitable issue. Do but consider the *suddenness* with which, in almost all cases of conversion from Tractism to Romanism, the change is made. You have men officiating one day in a Protestant church, and almost the next getting themselves rebaptized by a Romish priest—one day officiating in a church which declares the invocation of saints, and the worship of the host, as practised in the Church of Rome, idolatrous; and almost the next openly invoking the saints and worshipping the host, according to the rites of the Church of Rome—one day officiating in a church which pronounces that the Bishop of Rome hath and ought to have no authority in the realm of England; and the next, acknowledging his authority and swearing to obey it. Do but consider this, and ask yourselves, can the system which has influenced these men up to the moment of their change be really calculated to make men attached members of the church which they quit so suddenly?—or is it not rather evident that every principle which is of any real strength to keep the mind from Romanism must have been sapped and destroyed *long before* they took the decided step of quitting our communion?

Do not be deceived. The great body of the Tractites have no intention of remaining with us, except in the hope of carrying out their grand scheme of unprotestantizing our church, and re-making it after the model that pleases themselves. If they find this hopeless—as we trust they will—they will infallibly remove to Rome. Some may persevere longer than others; but none will persevere when all hope of effecting this is extinguished. Questions of doctrine, truth or falsehood, fact or fiction, are, with the great body of them, matters of comparatively minor consequence. What they want is something to give free scope “to the FEELINGS of awe, mystery, tenderness, reverence, devotedness, and other FEELINGS which may be especially called Catholic.” They will find it with us, if they can. If not, they will seek it where Mr. Newman has told them it may be found with certainty. They have themselves almost said this in so many words over and over again. They have, with an effrontery scarcely to be paralleled, thrown the blame of their disciples’ secession to Rome, upon the bishops of our church,—because those bishops felt themselves bound in conscience to protest at last against some of the most flagrant iniquities of the Tract movement. They have ventured to address our prelates in words of deliberate menace, warning them of the preparation which has been made for a large defection of the most promising sons of our church;—a preparation made by these very men themselves, who, by their own confession, have brought their scholars into such a state of devout attachment to the Anglican church and hostility to Romanism, that they are ready, at a very short notice, to re-



nounce the Anglican church and embrace Romanism, as soon as ever the countenance they have hitherto met with shall be withdrawn.

Can, then, the system of belief, and tone of sentiment, which is capable of so easily and quickly accommodating itself to Romanism in its worst shape, be, if indulged and fostered to the utmost, what these men pretend that it is, the surest protection and safeguard against Romish error?

The truth is, that Tractism has no strength or power at all, except in that which it has in common with Romanism. It grew out of the same root of corrupt human nature, and was nourished by the same influences as the Romish system; and a few words upon that matter will form, in the next Caution, a good conclusion of this part of our subject.

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## No. XVIII.

It is said that, some years ago, there was a bridge at Bath, in so crazy a condition that cautious persons chose rather to make a long circuit than run the risk of crossing it. One day, however, a very nervous lady, hurrying home to dress for the evening, came suddenly upon the spot without, till that moment, remembering the danger. The sight of the bridge reminded her of its ruinous state, just as she was about to set her foot upon it. But what was she to do? If she went on, the frail arch might give way under her; to go round would be fatiguing, and attended with much loss of time. She stood for some minutes trembling in anxious hesitation; but at last a lucky thought occurred to her—she called for a sedan-chair, and was *carried over* in that conveyance!

You laugh, perhaps, at this good lady's odd expedient for escaping danger by shutting out the view of it. But is not something of the same kind happening around you every day? When people, who are alarmed and perplexed at the danger of having to judge for themselves in religious matters, think to escape that danger by choosing to take some guide as an infallible one, and believe or disbelieve as he bids them, what is this but crossing the crazy bridge in a sedan-chair? In determining to believe whatever their guide affirms, they are in reality choosing to make every single exercise of faith which follows that original determination; and they are choosing to believe him infallible, into the bargain. There are at least as many chances of error as before against every single article of faith in the creed which they adopt upon their guide's



authority; and there are also additional chances against that authority itself. Thus, in order to get over more safely, they put not only their own weight, but that of the sedan-chair also, upon the tottering arch.

If a man, who felt himself encumbered with a number of small debts, were to borrow from a money-lender a sum sufficient to pay them off, but at an usurious interest, and should then feel quite at ease and happy in having got rid of his encumbrances, would not every one say he had acted a very silly part. He would only have substituted *one* heavy debt for many small ones; and, in the end, would have to pay more for that "accommodation" (as the usurer would call it) than if he had patiently worked through his original difficulties. Now, borrowing the authority of a supposed infallible guide to decide for us, is really making ourselves responsible *at once* for each of his decisions to which we thus promise submission; and, besides that, for submitting to him at all. We shall have to answer to the Almighty still, for every error we adopt on our guide's authority; and furthermore, for bowing to his guidance without good proof of his legitimate authority.

After all evasions have been tried, we must, whether we will or no, if we would believe at all, fall back upon our own judgment; and it is always by something that seems to them evidence, that all men, let them say what they will, ever did, and ever do, and ever *must* determine their belief. The old definition stands, and man is still "a rational animal;" and whether he reason rightly or wrongly, rashly or discreetly, hastily or cautiously, reason he will, to the end. When the question is, whether we are to believe, or doubt, or disbelieve any thing, we *must* determine that question by something which comes before the mind as *proof*. It may be a good or it may be a bad argument in itself; but we must in some way either rationally convince, or sophistically juggle our understandings into the persuasion of its being a good reason, before, do what we will, we *can* believe the thing asserted to be true.

And this will help to show you the absurdity of those who say that conscience, and not reason, is the judge of truth in religious matters. For, since men really *cannot* believe or disbelieve without something before the mind which it takes for evidence, the first dictate of a sound conscience would be to examine that evidence carefully, lest we should be deceived; so that, following conscience in this sense, would come to the same thing as following reason. But what these men mean by conscience is certain "FEELINGS of awe and reverence and admiration," and blind submission to authority, which they are pleased to call by that name; and the course which they mean to recommend is, taking for evidence of the *truth* of a religious system its apparent fitness for gratifying such feelings.

The difference, then, between them and us is just this—we de-



mand, in religious matters, the same sort of evidence as the known laws of reason and the common experience of mankind require as the only adequate proof in other matters. *They* substitute for such proof a sort of evidence in which impartial reason can discover no cogency, and upon which they would themselves refuse to act in the ordinary affairs of life. For though they will tell you that natural piety requires a man to abide by the creed of an ignorant or doating parent, or pastor, yet you will rarely find them ready to purchase a blind horse, or sell out stock at a disadvantage, or exchange a good farm for a bad one, in deference to the same venerable authority.

Unquestionably it must be granted that, in the most carefully conducted process of reasoning, after the most watchful sifting and weighing of evidence, the mind of man is still liable to error. But is this a reason for discarding all *helps* to the understanding? for flinging away care, and abandoning ourselves to chance? If indeed mistakes accumulated in proportion as we weighed evidence, scrutinized proof, and brought reason to bear, there might be some pretext for seeking to diminish those errors, by relaxing as much as possible the efforts which occasioned them;—by endeavouring not to reason at all, or as little, or as badly as we could. But if errors spring from haste, and prejudice, and imperfection of the understanding, is it not a strange remedy to quicken its too hurried pace, and limit its too narrow powers? Would a man act wisely, who, puzzled by a long and intricate calculation, and finding that, with all his care, he could not be sure of having escaped some errors, should boldly efface the sum total, and put down such a result as *ought*, on moral grounds, in his opinion, to be correct? Would any one choose such a clerk in money matters? Yet this is really the history of the theory and practice of what is called (but sadly miscalled) faith in many minds. They grow impatient at the doubts and difficulties which beset the operations of the understanding. Like Jack (in Swift's profane pasquinade) they have mused so long on the imperfections of eyesight, and the mischief of optical illusions, that they resolve to shut their eyes entirely, or, at least, never venture out in the daylight.

But observe the inconsistency of these men. Their great accusation against reason is, that it can never lead to *certainty*: that, if we follow it, there is always room for examination and re-examination in endless succession; and we can never be sure that all *possible* evidence has been examined, or the whole case thoroughly sifted. Now what is their substitute for these uncertainties? "Fling yourself," they say, "into the system next at hand, with an unhesitating faith, in the hope that, *if it be not true*, this total surrender of your mind to it will, sooner or later, discover its deficiencies, and lead you to a better. Work it out thoroughly if you can; and if



you find it fail to satisfy your religious sentiments, then, and not till then, try another.”\*

What sort of *faith* can these men possibly mean? You may be, it is granted, in your first choice, quite mistaken; yet your belief must be full and firm; your surrender of yourself total and unqualified; and you are comforted in yielding this unhesitating faith, and making this complete surrender, by the assurance that it will not improbably lead you to discover that your full and firm belief is misplaced, and that you have surrendered yourself to man, and not to God. You pass on, then, to another and a higher system; but still the moral and religious feelings may be, and probably are, but imperfectly developed. The infant judge of truth may have cast off its swaddling-bands, and yet be only in short coats. In a third stage, it may gain more manly attire, and yet, even after that, a thousand more seemly forms of clothing may await its growing limbs. Who knows but in the end it may outgrow them all? Naked it came forth from its mother's womb, and naked it may return. May not,—if these notions be correct,—Pantheism or Atheism be the final issue (as we know it actually has in many instances) of such a development of man's moral and religious feelings?

“To make,” then, as these men advise, “the will the slave of” those feelings which they call “conscience, and the understanding the slave of the will,” is deliberately to plunge into an abyss of darkness which no man can fathom. For though, as we have said, it is impossible for any one to believe by mere feeling, and without some real or supposed *reason* for belief, yet it is well known that the feelings may greatly influence the judgment, and make what is really weak evidence *seem* very strong. The judgment is like a pair of scales, and evidence like the weights; but the will holds the balance in its hand; and even a slight jerk will be sufficient, in many cases, to make the lighter scale appear the heavier. And the rapid progress of Tractism itself is mainly the result of such an influence of the feelings upon the judgment of men.

For, (1) the clergy (among whom, remember, it first gained ground) were predisposed to favour it by the elevated character which it seemed to confer upon their order, and the power with which it promised to invest them. And all this was the more flattering to them as a class, since it ascribed to them so much dignity, and such almost superhuman powers, in virtue of their office merely, independently of personal worth and qualifications.

Tractism made the clergy mediators between heaven and earth. It told them that the salvation of men depended upon certain rites

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\* WARD'S *Ideal*, *passim*.



and ceremonies which *they only* could perform. It made them sacerdotal priests; it gave them a right to demand the "confession" of the laity, and invested them with the exclusive power of "absolving" penitents; and moreover, it made them the sole distributors of alms, and thus concentrated upon them all the influence which the administration of large sums of money always brings with it. An instance has come to our knowledge (which we believe to be only one out of a multitude) which shows how anxious the Tractite clergy are to gain and to monopolize this source of influence. A lady, who was in the habit of going in person to the houses of the poor, to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," distributing such relief as seemed most suitable in each case, was strongly remonstrated with for this practice by a clergyman, who insisted on it that it was her duty to hand to him *all* she had to bestow, as an "offering on the altar," and to make him the channel through which all her charity was to flow!

True it is that while the Tractites were thus in fact magnifying their office as clergy, they sought (in Bacon's words) "to propitiate envy," by talking largely of the *awful responsibilities* which such an elevated view of it brought upon them.

But it is easy to see that such a view of it enables an arrogant and vainglorious mind to get rid of all that would be really most irksome to it in the discharge of the pastoral duty. For, the sense of responsibility is apt to be the most pressing in cases where no *fixed rules* can be laid down as a measure of the duty to be performed, and where every thing depends on the sincerity of our inward desire to perform it thoroughly.

It is, therefore, a very anxious work to be employed in trying by argument and persuasion to infuse a sense of religion into others; because we are left to judge for ourselves what arguments and persuasions should be used, and when and how far we can press them with advantage.

But if the pastoral office consisted mainly in going through a fixed routine of showy ceremonies in behalf of the people, *that* would be a work not only much more flattering to our vanity, but also much more easy to our conscience.

Again, to be obliged to discover for ourselves the true meaning of Scripture, and then to get others to perceive that such is its true meaning, this is a work of much responsibility and labour. But to deliver, like oracles, a set of established dogmas, which we have taken on trust, and without examination, from something that we call "the church," this is an office which has a very dignified look, but which is very easily executed.

Again, it is a difficult and anxious task to give *counsel* to perplexed consciences, and rationally to clear up their doubts: but to



quiet them by positive assurances of pardon, and by the application of a regular scale of penances, has much more the air of authority, while it brings with it much less trouble.

But even those of the clergy who could not be caught by such temptations as these, were predisposed in favour of such a doctrine as the "apostolical succession," for example, from the strongly marked distinction which it made between *their* ministry and that of the dissenters. They could not see (and even now there are many that cannot see) that there was any medium between such a doctrine as that, and admitting the *validity* of the ordination of any ignorant mechanic, set up by a handful of illiterate fanatics, or by himself. Nay, they fancied that, except you held the necessity of an "apostolical succession," you must place such an ignorant mechanic altogether *on a par* with *any* ordained minister.

Now these were hasty prejudices. For, even when we do admit that this or that man is a *real* Christian minister, but of a church ill-constituted (though a real church) and whose affairs are conducted on an injudicious plan or in a slovenly manner, does it follow that he ought to take rank with the ministers of a church that is quite the reverse? It would be hard to make out that a Dey of Algiers or Tripoli, or a Turkish Basha, is no real magistrate at all; but, considering how they are appointed, and how deposed, and on what system they govern, you would hardly put them on a level, in point of dignity, with our sovereign.

Thus the Tractites and semi-Tractites are led by their disgust at the presumptuous ignorance and coarseness of some dissenting preachers, to take up a theory which excludes all but episcopally ordained pastors from the ministry; and, in doing thus, they fail to perceive that they are giving way to feelings which might carry men much farther.

If, indeed, on such grounds, the system of our church is held forth as *preferable* to that of such irregular communities as make no adequate provision for respectable and well-instructed teachers, well and good; but if, on *such grounds*, you go on to *nullify* all the ordinations of a church (so called) which is chargeable with such faults, where are you to stop? One might have collected formerly out of some of our own dioceses, where the bishops were remiss, a good many clergymen, little, if at all, superior in learning, manners, or morals, to the meeting-house preachers; and among the Roman Catholic priests still worse. If, *on that ground*, you deny these men to be real Christian ministers, you must equally nullify the ordination of *all*, even the ablest and most learned and exemplary of their brethren; since *these* claim to be ministers, not on the ground of their qualifications, (which are



what make them *good* ministers,) but on a ground common to them with the worthless. For if any *one* minister of our church, ordained according to the rubric, be not a real (however unworthy) Christian minister, *all* our ordinations are invalid.

But in this, as in many other cases, men are apt to be misled by popular language. In common speech we often (figuratively) deny the designation of a minister, poet, Christian, man, &c., to one who wants what *ought* to characterize him; and then we are sometimes bewildered by our own language, and drawn on to take that literally which was, first, meant only for a strong figure.

Thus, for example, one might say of a garden that was greatly neglected, and overrun with wild plants, “this is not a *garden*,” or “it does not deserve the name of a *garden*,” though it is precisely because it *is*, literally, a garden, that we speak thus contemptuously of it; since, in an uncultivated spot, the sight of a luxuriant wild vegetation does not offend the eye.

And so, of a state or government, or again, church or ministry, which answer very badly the ends of their institution, we may say—“it does not deserve the name of a state”—or “of a church,” &c.—without implying that, literally, the laws of the one are of no force, or the sacraments of the other of no validity.

Indeed, if the constitution of a pretended state or church be so utterly absurd as to make it *incapable* of answering the ends of such an institution,—in an extreme case, like this, we are justified in absolutely denying its claims to such a title in any proper sense. But fixing the limits beyond which irregularity cannot pass without destroying the very existence of a church, involves a difficult question of *degrees*, with which we have, at present, no concern.

All that we are now concerned to point out is—that a natural wish to insure their dignity, on the part of the clergy of the Established Church, led many of them hastily to adopt a theory of “apostolical succession,” which was really quite unnecessary for such a purpose—at least so far as the *true dignity* of their position was to be insured. And so our Reformers seem to have thought. *They*, be it remembered, set themselves earnestly to discountenance presumptuous pretensions of *self-constituted teachers*, of which there were not a few among the fanatics who arose at the first outbreak of the Reformation. But with this view, (which is the object of Art. XXIII.) instead of setting forth the Tractite doctrine of an apostolical succession of sacerdotal priests, they judiciously confine themselves to a declaration that, “it is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments, before he is lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who



have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."

But, while the doctrine of "apostolical succession" flattered the prejudices of the whole order of the clergy, the *bishops* in particular were tempted to encourage—or, at least, not resist—the early spread of Tractism, by the large professions which its founders made of unbounded submission to Episcopal authority. Some of the bishops seem, at first, to have imagined that, whether the principles of the Tractites were quite sound or not, the influence of such a movement would tend to re-establish (what was much wanted) a sense of the duty of obedience to church rulers: and they appear to have imagined that any man, who promised such unbounded subjection, and expressed such awful reverence for the Episcopal office, might be easily kept within proper limits, if requisite, by the slightest exertion of their authority. Like Lear with his daughters, they failed to perceive that such lavish and extravagant professions were a sign of insincerity; and, like him, they have been rudely undeceived. They have seen their authority despised, and themselves openly insulted, by the very men who spoke of them as "living apostles," and rulers whose slightest wish was to be a law.

(II.) Again, the *high aristocracy* were naturally disposed to favour Tractism. They like what is genteel and splendid, in religion as well as in earthly matters; and so they were the more readily caught by the showy ceremonies of the Tractites, and the fine antiquarian taste which they displayed in building and decorating churches—the carving of screens—the embroidering of altar-cloths—the soft, sweet manner in which the prayers were intoned, and the picturesque way in which the performance of the Liturgy was made a pleasing spectacle. Moreover, the aristocracy are accustomed to be *saved trouble*, and to have things *done for them* by others. They like, therefore, to have some one to act toward them in religion as the apothecary does in medicine; whom they implicitly trust in that, and swallow the dose he prescribes, while they would scorn to admit him as an equal, or take pains to learn pharmacy themselves. In the same manner, they intrust the care of their horses to their grooms, and of their pleasure-grounds to their gardener, without putting themselves to the trouble of learning their arts.

Now, the claims of the Tractite clergy exactly fell in with these lazy and supercilious aristocratic prejudices. The clergy offered to take the burden of *understanding* religion, and the responsibility of determining how laymen ought to act, off the minds of men unaccustomed to trouble, and impatient of responsibility; and thus both parties were deluded into the persuasion that, by such an arrangement, the dignity of each was increased.



But surely there can be no real dignity in devolving upon another that pursuit of religious truth—that personal care about our soul's best interests—which is the noblest employment in which any human being can be engaged. Nor, on the other hand, is the clergyman truly honoured—but rather degraded—by being placed in a position corresponding to that of a groom or a gardener.

For, a man is *really* most honouring him whom he takes to instruct him in what he himself makes it his great object to *learn*. A medical student looks up to an able medical lecturer; a student of law to the teacher of law; and so in other similar cases. But it is quite a different and far inferior kind of honour that is paid to one who merely tells you exactly *what to do*, in some matter which you do not wish to learn for yourself. A supposed skilful gardener is *implicitly trusted* by one who has no skill in horticulture, and who leaves him to take care that the garden shall have good flowers and fruit, and, therefore, abandons it wholly to his management. Such inferior agents, however, are very apt to pride themselves highly upon the influence which they exercise over great personages, and the trust which such exalted individuals repose in them; not considering that any such great personage trusts them implicitly in proportion to his own ignorance and carelessness about such matters; and that, in proportion to that ignorance and carelessness, is his unfitness to judge of the qualifications of the agents whom he employs.

The spread of Tractism, we have no doubt, was greatly favoured by such natural but erroneous prejudices as these; and accordingly you cannot have failed to remark that it was among the clergy, and the upper classes, that it made its earliest and most considerable progress.

But, in the meanwhile, its promoters have not trusted merely to circumstances for the advancement of their cause. They have shown a zeal, a skill, and an industry in the prosecution of their object, which might have gained much success, even with far less to favour it in the prejudices of men.

From the first they counted among their number many persons of undoubted ability, and of wonderful dexterity and readiness as writers; and at first they gained an almost unexampled command of the public press. Not to speak of their own Tracts, poured forth with marvellous rapidity and circulated very widely, there was hardly a leading journal or periodical which did not, at the commencement of their career, lend them a helping hand. And though several of these afterward turned against the system of Tractism, this was not till they had themselves made the young lion strong enough to scorn the assailants who might have strangled him when a cub.



Nor was it only by the open and direct inculcation of their opinions they made way for themselves. That which one of the original conspirators aptly called "*the poisoning system*" proved even still more effectual.\* Works were produced in almost every style of composition, to catch the unwary, and the tenets of Tractism cautiously infused into them all, so as to steal upon the reader when he least expected them; when he took up the volume only to verify some fact of ancient history, or to beguile an hour with an amusing tale. Their aim, indeed, was to create a literature for themselves, and exercise an influence over every thing that came before the public mind, from the discussions of the severest science down to the songs and stories of the nursery.

By such silent arts as these, they often evaded opposition, by turning no decided front to the enemy. And even in those writings of theirs in which they professed openly to teach or to defend their opinions, there was a great solemnity of style, mixed with a certain *cloudiness* and vagueness of expression, which was at once very imposing to their disciples, and very puzzling to their antagonists. Hence, a peculiarly bold assertion was generally guarded with a "so to speak," "if one may use the expression," or "somehow," or "in a manner," or "in a certain sense," or with some other such peace-making qualification. Often a paragraph seemed to open with a flourish of trumpets, as if to announce the coming of some important sentiment; but, after wonderful preparations, the procession had hardly begun, before the meaning, after just giving you a glimpse of its visage, slipped aside under cover of some such timid limitation, and left the empty pomp of glittering verbiage to stalk, in mock solemnity, to the conclusion.

With all their arts, however, they could not long or wholly avoid direct opposition; and when it arose, then, if their assailant were weak or unguarded, they were sure to treat his attack as an important one, and give him an elaborate reply: but if his arguments really pressed them close, and were troublesome to grapple with, their practice was to pass by his work with a sneer, or give it no notice whatever; but act in every respect "*as if it had never been written*," or, at least, never heard of.

It seems to be in pursuance of this same stealthy policy of evading rather than encountering any strong opposition, that the adherents of the party now generally disown the imputation of Tractism, and declare that they have no connection with any one who can properly be called a Tractite. "Oh, the subject of the Oxford Tracts is hardly ever mentioned among us now. We consider it as gone by. We have no wish to revive an extinct controversy, now

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\* Mr. FROUDE, see his *Remains*.



that the danger is past. The extravagancies which prevailed at one time are now abandoned, and we regard the whole matter as passed away and obsolete." This is the kind of language which (strange to say) one may hear commonly in the very place where Tractite principles are the most prevailing. And they are thus enabled to spread themselves insidiously, while suspicion is lulled to sleep, like a dry-rot, which ever flourishes the more in proportion as *air and light* are excluded. An avowed Tractite is now as hard to be found as the Fens in Lincolnshire, for which the traveller is always referred to the next parish. "Marshdyke in the Fens!—no such thing. If you want to see *them*, you must go on to Eelpool." You *do* go on to Eelpool; but the Fens are as far off as ever. "Why certainly there *were* some Fens here formerly, but they have been drained now time out of mind. You will not come to a real Fen till you get to Muddleham." But at Muddleham it is still the same story: and so, if you take the word of the inhabitants, you travel on till you find—(not the Fens, but)—yourself upon the sea-coast, with nothing but the broad ocean before you. So it is with Tractism. Mr. A. declares he is no Tractite, but owns that the name may be properly applied to Mr. B. Mr. B. rejects the imputation, and complains that he has been confounded with Mr. C., from whom he differs very widely. Mr. C. owns that he may go a little further than Mr. B., but still maintains that there is a marked distinction between his views and those of Mr. D., &c. &c. Hardly any one now chooses to avow Tractism. They are only defenders of the "middle course"—the just medium—the VIA MEDIA. They "admire, on the whole, the *early* volumes of the Tracts for the Times, but they are shocked and disgusted at the later ones. Tract 90, in particular, was going much too far."

Now the VIA MEDIA, as we have already said, is neither more nor less than stopping short between the premises and the conclusion. The premises of Tractism were quite sufficiently laid down in the first two volumes of the Tracts, and in the very earliest writings of the school; so plainly, indeed, that from these alone the sagacious author of that clever pamphlet,\* the "Pope's Pastoral," was enabled to predict (about seventeen years ago) almost all that followed in the later ones. The men, therefore, who are inculcating the principles of the early Tracts cannot be safe teachers, though they may choose, themselves, to abstain from following them out by going over formally and openly to Rome. Nay, they may be all the more dangerous for that very reason. The decoy-duck itself, you know, is never caught, though it leads thousands of its brethren into the snare.

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\* It has been reprinted in the volume of Bishop DICKINSON's *Remains*.



And the principal method of decoy, at present, is not so much argument as other kinds of persuasion. Among these, none seem more popular just now than what are called "brotherhoods" and "sisterhoods of mercy;" the real grand object of which appears to be not so much almsgiving itself, as, under pretence of that, imbuing with Tractite principles those who receive and those who administer "the charity." And it is part of the system not only to make a great parade of their works of charity, but also to represent themselves as the *only* persons who pay any regard to the wants of the poor in those localities where such associations have been at work. Bold and persevering assertions often gain credence with the thoughtless; and thus it has come to be believed by many, in some cases which have lately made much noise in the world, that in such and such districts the poor were left wholly unthought of till these sisterhoods arose, the truth being the very reverse: twenty times as much was being done for the poor, and in a more judicious and efficient way, by persons who were content to go about their labour of love quietly, without blowing a trumpet before them, or wearing any fantastic uniform.

Now if a sincere and confessed Roman Catholic, or one of any other persuasion, does good among the poor, even though he may be influenced, in part, by the desire of attracting people to his religion by "letting his light shine before men," he deserves praise even from those who may think his peculiar sentiments erroneous. But, when persons who are professed members of one church, and secret adherents of another, make use of their works of charity as enticements to those whom they would insidiously proselyte, and whom they seek to seduce from their faith, gradually, by making them at first merely recipients of their charity, or agents in its distribution, then, even though they may have some mixture of humane feelings in what they do, they deserve the strongest censure for that which is fundamentally a system of fraud. And one is shocked and surprised to find people speaking of such persons' "charitable works" as a sort of *set-off* against the deceit.

Surely, if one could address fish as rational beings, one would not expatiate on the deliciousness of the bait offered, except in the way of warning them of the hook it is meant to conceal.

The success with which, in many places, this kind of artifice has been practised is something really surprising. It seems to realize the ancient fable about the capture of Troy by the Greeks; who, as the tale goes, succeeded at last, by pretending to *raise the siege* in despair, and sail home; while in reality they only departed to a short distance, leaving behind them an ambushed party, who secretly gained admittance within the city-walls, and opened the gates to the besiegers.



Such then are some of the natural prejudices which favour, and some of the arts employed to further the progress of Tractism. But why did it break out just at the time it did? The *predisposition* which always existed in the human mind, must surely have gained some additional strength just twenty years ago, to produce that outbreak. Now, what gave it that strength? Upon this subject we shall have something to say in the next Caution.

END OF PART II.







